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CHRIST
THE
CENTRAL EVIDENCE OF CHRISTIANITY
AND OTHER
PRESENT DAY TRACTS

REV. PRINCIPAL CAIRNS, D.D.

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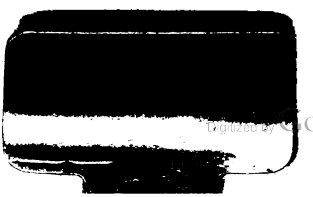

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CHRIST THE CENTRAL EVIDENCE OF CHRISTIANITY.

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CHRIST

THE

Central Evidence of Christianity

AND OTHER

PRESENT DAY TRACTS

BY THE LATE

PRINCIPAL CAIRNS, D.D.,

Author of "UNBELIEF IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY," ETC., ETC.

THE RELIGIOUS TRACT SOCIETY:

56, PATERNOSTER ROW; 65, ST. PAUL'S CHURCHYARD.

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PREFACE.

THE late Principal Cairns took the liveliest interest in the starting and progress of the series of "Present Day Tracts." He was the author of the first published, that which stands as number four in this volume, and three out of the first six issued were from his pen.

Representations have been made to the Committee of the Religious Tract Society that the issue in a special volume of all the contributions to the series by Dr. Cairns—six in number—would be welcome to his large circle of friends both in and out of Scotland. They have willingly acceded to the request, and hence the present volume. The six sections exhibit all Dr. Cairns' well-known robustness of mind and vigour of expression. They will be found a valuable handbook of some of the most important departments of Christian evidence.

It is superfluous now to speak of the value and success of the "Present Day Tracts." May the great Head of the Church deign to use this latest special application of them for the extension of His Kingdom and for the good of men!

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CHRIST

THE

CENTRAL EVIDENCE OF CHRISTIANITY.

BY

THE REV. PRINCIPAL CAIRNS, D.D.,

AUTHOR OF "UNBELIEF IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY"
(*Being the Cunningham Lecture for* 1880).

THE RELIGIOUS TRACT SOCIETY:
56, PATERNOSTER ROW; 65, ST. PAUL'S CHURCHYARD; AND
164, PICCADILLY.

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Analysis of the Argument.

I. The Christ of the Gospels is a real person, because of the wonderfulness, originality, and unity of the conception of His character, which are admitted by the most eminent unbelievers; because of the harmony of the portraiture found amid all the diversities in the four Gospels; because of the failure of recent attempts to invalidate the historical truth of the Gospels, or produce a new reading of them which commands general acceptance.

II. The Christ of the Gospels is shown to be the centre and strength of every argument for the truth of Christianity. The miracles of the Old Testament all lead up to Him. The success of Christianity is due to Him. Prophecy derives all its coherence and significance from Him. The adaptation of Christianity is due to Him. The argument from the reflection of God's holiness and love centres in Him.

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CHRIST

THE

CENTRAL EVIDENCE OF CHRISTIANITY.

IT is becoming more and more apparent to friend and foe, in the great struggle between Christian faith and doubt, that the key of the position is the person of Christ Himself; and that so long as the obvious meaning of the Gospel narrative as to the life, character, and work of that grand central figure can be accepted as "fact, and not delusion," no weapon lifted against Christianity can prevail. It is a presumptive argument of truth in any system to have a centre; and in this tract I propose to show, confining attention chiefly to the four Gospels, that the life of Christ as there exhibited, is a reality, and is so fitted to bind all the Christian evidences together as to furnish an additional and independent evidence of the divinity of the Christian faith. Our question is twofold. Is the Christ of the Gospels a real person? If so, how does this concentrate, and thus strengthen all the evidences of Christianity?

Christ the key of the position in the struggle between faith and doubt.

The question twofold.

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The Gospels the fountain head of our knowledge of Christ and His work.

It is not necessary to go into any other part of the New Testament to find a sufficient answer to the question, what the Gospels really mean by their narratives of Christ's life and death and resurrection. No doubt most important and precious expositions are, as Christians believe, divinely added. But to the vast majority of Christians, it has ever seemed that the Gospels, not excluding the foregoing light of the Old Testament, are the very fountain heads of all Christian doctrine, and they are so because they contain the portrait of Christ Himself, and His own utterances as to His personal rank and character, and the aim and issue of His earthly mission. The sum of the teaching of Christ's recorded life and history may be given thus: that we have in Him as man, a perfect and sinless example; that He is truly God as well as man; and that as a Saviour, by His sacrifice on the cross, and other provisions of His redemption, He rescues men from the guilt and power of sin, and restores them to God.

The sum of the teaching of Christ's life and history

Deeper statements of Christian theology are not here needed. These are concurred in by the immense majority of Christians as drawn from and founded on the records of Christ's own life. Nor by them only, for there are others of no small name, unhappily not themselves Christians, who grant that Christians have not here misinterpreted their own records, and that, whether true or false

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these are the conceptions of Christ's person, character, life, and influence, which the writers of these documents intended them to embody.

The Gospel conceptions of Christ's person and work.

It will be granted, to begin with, that these conceptions of a human life, actually realizing perfection, nay, embracing an incarnation of God, and thus affording a complete and divinely sanctioned remedy for moral and spiritual evil, are the most remarkable, simply as conceptions, in all literature. The mere statement of them is enough to relieve us from the charge of vagueness and generality when we speak of the life, character, and work of Christ; we can therefore proceed to the argument of this tract, and show first that these are not mere conceptions, however great, but facts of a true and solid history; and then that all Christian evidence becomes, by this proof, strong with a new strength, and bright with a new light.

Their historical reality.

The proof of my first point is more copious than can be fully stated; but the arguments for the historical reality of the life and character of Christ, as indicated, are such as follow:

Proof from the wonderfulness and originality of the Christ of the Gospels.

1. The historical truth of the Christ of the Gospels is vouched for by *its transcendent wonderfulness and originality*. It is not the Christian Church only that speaks thus; for even those on its outer verge or beyond its limits give back Christian language here with a strange echo. Rousseau's picture of Christ—almost incredible

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Rousseau's picture of Christ.

from a man of such life, though he always claimed to be a Christian—is wound up in these words, "The Gospel has marks of truth so great, so striking, so perfectly inimitable, that the inventor of it would be more astonishing than the hero."[1] Nor can we say that Rousseau limits himself to the human side of Jesus, for he says, "If the life and death of Socrates are those of a sage, the life and death of Jesus are those of a God."[2]

[1] *Emile*, Book IV.

[2] *Emile*, Book IV.

Mr. J. S. Mill's concessions.

It is a lower testimony that Mr. Stuart Mill delivers, yet though he takes exception to the proper deity of Jesus, as not claimed even by Himself, he grants the originality of His character to be a proof of its historical truth. "Who among the disciples of Jesus or among their proselytes was capable of inventing the sayings ascribed to Jesus, or of imagining the life and character revealed in the Gospels? Certainly not the fishermen of Galilee, as certainly not St. Paul."[3] The question then comes back on Mr. Mill, who it was that suggested to the Evangelists the more divine features of Jesus, or those which have led the Christian world to take Him for divine. According to Mr. Mill himself, "it is the God incarnate, more than the God of the Jews or of Nature, who, being idealised, has taken so great and salutary a hold on the modern mind."[4] But if the Evangelists could not have invented, as he grants, the human Christ, how much less could they have idealised Him into

[3] *Essays on Theism*, p. 252.

[4] *Essays on Theism*, p. 252.

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God? A history which has led the vast majority of readers in all ages to feel that it was more than human, is confessedly beyond human construction. Christian theology itself is baffled when it tries to state in propositions the two natures of Christ, and the relation between them. The decrees of councils and the terms of creeds rather exclude error than grasp truth. Yet here admittedly, in the narratives of the Evangelists, the impossible is achieved. The living Christ walks forth, and men bow before Him. Heaven and earth unite all through: power with gentleness, solitary greatness with familiar intimacy, ineffable purity with forgiving pity, unshaken will with unfathomable sorrow. There is no effort in these writers, but the character rises till it is complete. It is thus not only truer than fiction or abstraction, but truer than all other history, carrying through utterly unimaginable scenes the stamp of simplicity and sincerity, creating what was to live for ever, but only as it had lived already, and reflecting a glory that had come so near and been beheld so intently, that the record of it was not only full of "grace," but of "truth."

A superhuman history requires a superhuman origin.

The Christ of the Evangelists.

The unity of the character of Jesus is one of the most singular features in each Gospel narrative. We apprehend this better when some great and admired writer in going over the same sacred ground falls, so to speak, out of the piece. An instance of this has struck me much in so con-

The unity of Christ's character.

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summate a master of description as Goethe; and it has struck me all the more that the injury is only done to the Saviour as His character is reflected in His disciples. In the admired Easter scene in the *Faust*, the chorus of angels bring the message of resurrection, and the women take up the language of disappointment, saying that they find Christ no longer here. This may be the result of lingering doubt; but when the message is sounded again by the angels, and taken up by the chorus of disciples, who now accept the fact, their first utterance is one of grief that their Master is raised to heaven, and they are left to suffer below, so that the angels need again to comfort them by the assurance of His continued and invariable presence. Now nothing is less like the Gospel scenes. The disciples suffer there only from the stroke of Christ's death, and the fear that His rising was too good news to be true. Their sense of joy and of triumph, of joy in, and of triumph with, Him, were He but risen indeed, was so great, that no room could possibly have been left, with Christ anywhere, for such lamentation as Goethe introduces; and thus these artless, unlettered men have drawn a truer Christ than this great genius, with their example before him, and with all Christian literature beside, was able to do.

Comparison with Goethe's conception.

Contrast between the two

2. A *second* argument for the historical reality of Christ's life and character, *is found in the consent*

The manifold witness to Christ.

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of so many separate testimonies. I am not now urging the credibility of the Evangelists on the ordinary historical grounds of their nearness to the facts, and their integrity as witnesses. These considerations cannot, in their own place, be overestimated; and the whole strain of recent criticism is in the direction of confirming disputed points of date and authorship. I proceed now, however, rather upon the simple fact that so many separate writers, with visible independence, should have drawn essentially the same unparalleled character. One Gospel is a marvel, what shall we say of four, each with its distinct plan—its enlargements and omissions, its variations even where most coincident, its problems as yet unsolved, but always yielding something to fresh enquiry, and only making more manifest the unchallengeable oneness and divinity of the history? The difficulties of the Gospels from divergence are as nothing compared with the impression made by them all of one transcendent creation; and for my part, if I rejected inspiration, I should have reason to be still more astonished. Some slight mistake could so sadly have impaired perfection—or yet more easily lowered Divinity; some careless handling might have deranged the balance at the most critical point, or pulled down the structure in hopeless disaster. Yet, though we see how different the plan of each Gospel is, there is not any such trace of failure. The long discourses are

The oneness of the fourfold testimony.

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The differences and harmony of the Gospels.

left out by Mark; but in action his Christ equals that of Matthew. Luke has his own type both of parable and miracle; but the same inimitable figure starts up from all. The sorest trial to the familiar features comes from the fourth Gospel, without a parable and hardly a miracle like the foregoing, and with so great a flood of novelty, especially towards the end. But the unity in diversity is only the more marvellous. The Christ of the fourth Gospel is the Word of God; but He is still the Son of man. He utters no Sermon on the Mount; but He still preaches the Kingdom of Heaven. The sheep scattered abroad find in Him still the Good Shepherd. There is no exorcism; but the prince of this world is cast out. There is no transfiguration, but His glory is throughout beheld; no agony in the garden, but His soul is troubled. Mary and Martha reappear, but attended by Lazarus. He does not say, "This is My body," but He gives His flesh to eat; and words as heavenly, and in fuller measure, soothe the parting meal. He has the same night watches. He sheds the same tears. He walks the same waters, and ascends up where He was before. His prayer in all the Gospels is intercession—in the last most prolonged and tender. He returns from the grave to breathe the Holy Ghost, and to connect that name with the Father's and His own. His presence is the final hope of the earlier Gospels; His

The same person and life in all.

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coming of the last; and the closing charge but repeats all former calls, "Follow thou Me." In the view of this vast and stupendous harmony, how small are all objections, as that the scenes in the fourth Gospel lie more in Jerusalem, though this also is met by the word in the other Gospels, "How *often* would I have gathered you;"[1] or that the chronology differs, though the last Gospel really aids us in solving chronological difficulties; or that the style tends more to self-assertion in the face of unbelief, though this is part of the self-revelation that enters into the idea of this Gospel, and is abundantly prefigured in the great denunciation of the Pharisees, and in the sad but lofty utterances of Capernaum, "No man knoweth the Father but the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him;"[2] the exact parallel of the intercessory prayer, "O righteous Father, the world hath not known Thee; but I have known Thee, and these have known that Thou hast sent Me."[3] With all these data, then, and many others, of the Gospel records, which are not conjectures but facts, the only rational conclusion is, that they embody reality, the greatest reality ever transacted on the scene of time; that the very diversities so often appealed to as an objection to this conclusion really strengthen it, and prove that writings which can so bring forth the one out of the manifold have in them not only truth but inspiration; and that the Christian

Trivial objections.

[1] Matthew xxiii. 37.

[2] Matthew xi. 27.

[3] John xvii. 25.

Conclusion of the truth of the Gospels strengthened by their diversities.

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Church stands in the centre of all history, divinely planted there, when she still proclaims as from the beginning, that Jesus is the Christ—the Son of God.

The failure of recent attempts to invalidate the historical truth of the Gospels.

3. A *third* argument, and the last here adduced by us, in favour of the strict and literal truth of the Gospel views of Christ *is the failure of recent attempts to set them aside.* If the Christ of the Evangelists were unhistorical, surely by this time some better reading of the story ought to have been established to the satisfaction of all. But as it is, the simple primitive records keep the field; and every new scheme is only brought to birth to find a speedy extinction. Let me illustrate this by two instances—the modern theories of Christ's moral excellence, and the alleged origin of superhuman views of His character and work.

Modern theories of Christ's moral excellence.

Take *first* the modern *theories of Christ's moral excellence.* They have at first a look of great liberality towards Christ and Christianity, and of almost unexpected concession and homage. Thus,

Renan's eulogy of Christ.

says Renan, "This Sublime Person who daily presides still over the destiny of the world, we may call divine, not in the sense that Jesus absorbed all the divine, or to use a scholastic word, was adequate to it, but in the sense that Jesus is the individual who has made his species take the greatest step towards the divine." "Jesus is the highest of the pillars that shew to man whence he comes and

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whither he ought to tend. In him is condensed all that is good and exalted in our nature."[1] But then mark how all, in harmony with rationalism, is qualified. "He was not impeccable; he has conquered the same passions that we combat; no angel of God comforted him, save his own good conscience; no Satan tempted him, but only that which each carries in his breast."[2]

[1] *Vie de Jesus*, pp. 457–8 (11th French edition).

Renan's rationalism.

[2] Page 456.

Exactly so is it with Strauss. He speaks in his second *Leben Jesu*, 1864, as if Christ's teaching in the Sermon on the Mount brought to the world a genial revolution, "like a fertilizing rain in spring."[3] He grants "that in every respect Jesus stands in the first line of those who have developed the ideal of humanity," and "by embodying it in his own person has given it the most living warmth, while the society that proceeded from him has secured for this ideal the widest reception among mankind."[4] But he also, like Renan, soon makes exceptions, and speaks of sides of excellence that in Jesus "were only faintly indicated, or not even hinted at."[5]

Strauss' description of Christ.

[3] *Leben Jesu*, p. 204

[4] *Leben Jesu*, p. 625

His exceptions.

[5] Page 626.

We see something, though less, of the same conflict in Mr. John S. Mill. "When this pre-eminent genius is combined with the qualities of probably the greatest moral reformer and martyr to that mission who ever existed upon the earth, religion cannot be said to have made a bad choice in pitching upon this man as the ideal representa-

Mr. J. S. Mill.

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tive and guide of humanity; nor even now would it be easy even for an unbeliever to find a better translation of the rule of virtue from the abstract to the concrete than to endeavour so to live that Christ would approve our life."[1] Mr. Mill is indeed restrained from uttering the same qualifications as Renan and Strauss; but they lie in the context of his system, which excludes an absolutely perfect man as a miracle, just as Mr. Mill takes exception expressly to Jesus as divine.

[1] *Essays on Theism*, p. 255.

Mill denies Christ's divinity.

The Christ of Renan, Strauss, and Mill incredible.

Now, without raising the question of divinity, is it not plain that such a moral hero, great but still defective, as these writers have endeavoured to substitute for the Christ of the Gospels, is utterly incredible, if the Gospels are to have even so much historical worth as they themselves allow? What flaw have the Evangelists exposed in Christ, so as to have it generally admitted as in the case of the other great men of the Bible? While the biographers of Christ, with their severe simplicity, do not panegyrize Him, it is written on the face of their narrative that they hold Him faultless. And what is far more, Christ holds Himself so, and refuses to accept the eulogies, even the most gently qualified, that are now heaped upon Him. Any noble type of goodness that is still imperfect, is always painfully, exquisitely alive to the imperfection, confesses it before man, lays it open before God, and repels with utter abhorrence words that

The Christ of the Gospels faultless.

Christ claimed sinlessness.

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savour of unlimited perfection. Had the character of Jesus been what these writers assert, could He have concealed it from Himself, or disguised it from His disciples? Must He not have uttered some note of warning, like the greatest of His followers, "Stand up, I myself also am a man." "We also are men of like passion with yourselves." Whereas Christ challenges the Pharisees: "Which of you convinceth Me of sin?"[1]

Christ's challenge to the Pharisees.

[1] John viii. 46.

Even in the most solemn act of prayer, and in the review of a completed life, He addresses the Father, "I have glorified Thee on the earth. I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do."[2] These, it may be said, are expressions drawn from the fourth Gospel, and in its peculiar strain. But do not the synoptists represent Jesus as fully accepting the professedly divine testimony, "Thou art My beloved Son: in Thee I am well pleased"? And does He not claim universal obedience and imitation, as in the words, "Learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest to your souls"? We cannot but here admire the superiority of these simple writers to their modern improvers. The Gospel Christ without stain, without confession, without prayer for pardon, is in harmony with Himself and with every law of moral congruity; whereas this Christ of recent criticism, covering up under a fair exterior the blemishes which he must feel but never avows,

His address to the Father.

[2] John xvii. 4.

The Father's testimony.

The Christ of recent criticism violates truth and reason.

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is not so remote from the whited sepulchres that he denounces; and the picture violates every canon of truth and reason.

The origin of superhuman views of Christ.

The *second* instance where a departure from the Gospel scheme lands in incoherence and absurdity, is in regard to *the alleged origin of superhuman views of Christ's life and character.*

The testimony of the Gospels.

According to the uniform testimony of the Gospels, Christ from the beginning understands His own dignity, and the nature of His mission as a Saviour by sacrifice; whereas His disciples, notwithstanding His frequent teaching, have very vague notions of His true greatness, and wholly fail to take in the meaning and necessity of His death, and by consequence the certainty and importance of His resurrection. It is only when Christ returns from the dead, and teaches His followers on these points from Scripture, that they begin to understand His true design, and are lifted up from the depression into which they had fallen, so as to be henceforth, after He has left them, suitable witnesses of these great truths to others.

The opening of the disciples' minds.

No part of the Gospel narrative is more natural or more beautiful than this opening of minds blinded by prejudice, like the rest of their countrymen, to the real greatness of their Lord, and to the sacrificial character of the death which had so much afflicted them; but which they now see, through the lesson of His resurrection and His own instructions, to have

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been the needful path to the saving of mankind, and to His own glory. But now mark how all this is, by modern criticism, dislocated and turned into utter chaos! According to some, Christ's own plan changes through stress of circumstances; and others, who save Him from this weakness or crooked design, credit His followers with a fertility of expedient and a flexibility of character that go into the regions of the unreal and monstrous. Without the help of miracle, or word of the returning Christ, or prompting of any spirit higher than their own invention or fancy, they suddenly believe in an imaginary resurrection. In the depths of the darkest midnight, when overwhelmed by the catastrophe which has wrecked for ever their worldly hopes, they start into creators of a moral world of boundless novelty. They not only devise a resurrection of which previously they had heard nothing from Jesus or any other, but they read this into the Old Testament, and with it an entirely new conception of their Messiah. They raise their dead Master not only to life but to divinity, finding for this also warrant in misapplied texts and oracles without number. They construct the Trinity, or at least its outline. They set up the Atonement, and make the failure of the Crucified the end of the law and the hope of the world. Thus these few dreamers, whose paralysed faculties construct in a few days out of nothing

Destructive effects of modern criticism.

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the gigantic scheme which has exercised all the theologians of Christendom, go forth with an invincible enthusiasm begotten of disaster to try it upon the world, and by a marvel greater than its own origin, to succeed. Verily this is the romance of history, where the conjurer's wand plays havoc with all reality, and laws of nature, to escape miracle, are so twisted off their hinges as henceforth to lose all power of being shut or opened. We thus see the strength of the Gospel record when unbelief is challenged, instead of mere endless doubts, to produce its own solution, and this poor incoherent phantom starts from the grave to take the place and do the work of Him who was dead, and is alive for evermore.

The strength of the Gospel record.

Having thus briefly surveyed the massive foundation of proof, on which the reality of the time-hallowed Gospel story reposes, and which all the criticism and reconstructive hypotheses of our own age only bring into greater prominence, let us, as our *second* topic, endeavour to show how the personal Christ—living, sinless, divine—mingles with and adds strength to every argument for the truth of Christianity.

Every argument for Christianity strengthened by Christ.

1. If we begin with evidences resting on divine *power* as bearing witness to Christianity, Christ is the visible centre of them all. The miracles of the Old Testament all lead up to Him; those of the New all stream forth from His own person, or

The relation of Old Testament miracles to Christ.

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through His messengers. A miracle may seem detached or difficult; but if connected with the great central miracle of the Incarnation, it acquires credibility and value. It is an earlier or later stroke in the same battle; and if the Son of God be really in the field, it is not wonderful that higher than mortal weapons should gather round Him. The harmony between the inner and outer miracle is here complete; and when the rod of Christ's strength strikes the rock of natural law, it is only reasonable that it should "turn the rock into a standing water, the flint into a fountain of waters."

The success of Christianity due to Christ.

The same consideration gathers up to this ultimate centre the argument from the success of Christianity. Though not the same display of power without means as absolute miracle is, this has been always justly reckoned a virtual and practical miracle. The argument has force when looked on simply as the working of God, through whom the weapons of this warfare become mighty; but at every point it is enhanced by connection with Christ, as presiding over the struggle, and wielding all power in heaven and in earth. The sign of the cross, as in the vision of Constantine, whatever we think of that tradition, by stamping itself on all Christian victories, gives them a more visibly Divine character. The contrast between original weakness and ultimate triumph is more marked.

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. The purity of the means,—and with pure means alone Christianity connects this argument,—recalls the simplicity, humility, and righteousness of the Founder of this kingdom. His Church breaks forth as the expansion of His own power, silent and gradual, but invincible; and thus there is a unity in the process, which can be felt not only by Christians, but by unbelievers, and the secret conviction is inspired by the march of history that all things are put under His feet.

The relation of the evidence from experience to Christ.

So is it with that argument from personal experience. Though it cannot be directly pleaded with unbelievers, it is with Christians the most signal of all acts of Divine power, and renews in every Christian life the deepest side of the miracle of Damascus. For there is here contact with the personal Jesus in His risen life and greatness, in His power to stamp His image and to convey His will, so that this most subduing of all evidences prolonged into the manifold experiences of a Christian life, and carrying with it a sense of liberty, peace, and nearness to God, otherwise wholly unattainable, so visibly centres in Christ, that it can not even be conceived of without Him, and is really the conscious reception and reproduction of His own life and character. Nor is this argument so incommunicable as has sometimes been alleged: for Christian experience has a power of irradiation even into dark and unsightly places;

The contact of the soul with Christ.

Christ's life and character reproduced in the Christian.

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and wherever it goes it bears with it not only something of rebuke in Christ's name, but of hope to the most outcast and fallen, that the dead may yet live again, and the lost be found.

The relation of prophecy to Christ.

2. The evidences of Christianity that depend on Divine *knowledge* as exerted on the side of the gospel, are all equally related to Christ. Limiting ourselves here to the evidence from prophecy (though other indications of supernatural knowledge are found in Scripture), it is remarkable how natural prophecy becomes, as well as how much more forcible, when it ceases to be a mere heap of divinations or unconnected oracles, and points according to a settled and gradually developed plan to a central person in history—the Divine Saviour. The greater, purer, brighter, we make Christ, the more does the prophetic argument gain at every point. The Christ of the rationalist repels prophecy, not only from the prejudice against the supernatural, but quite as much because there is nothing in such a Christ to attract the eye of the whole world from the beginning. It is like kindling a star in the sky, and bringing the wise men all the way to Bethlehem to show them little, if anything, greater than themselves; and hence rationalism cannot for very shame accept the prophetic theory, but must seal up every ray of earlier Scripture that seems to point so far forward, and parcel out all the greatness that would naturally

Christ the strength of the prophetic argument.

Prophecy and rationalism incompatible.

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be concentrated in Christ amidst all conceivable human subjects possible, with whom the prophets are supposed to have begun and ended.

The inadequacy of rationalistic views of prophecy.

It calls this guess-work of a human sagacity or longing, groping all round a limited horizon, and arrested everywhere by the local and temporal, a reasonable scheme. Yet it is put to sore distress, not only because the grand and sublime visions of the prophets burst at every point through this narrow environment, but also because rationalism itself wants larger anticipations of a coming Deliverer to operate with, so as even fantastically and unreally to create the picture of a great future, and a great world-monarch in the heart of it, which might in so far account for Christianity by misread and over-coloured fulfilment.

The perplexity of rationalism on the subject of prophecy.

This is one of the most perplexing problems of the rationalism of our time, unable as it is to believe in prophecy, but compelled to believe in anticipation, yet driven back from the anticipation in its fulness, and torturing it at every point to speak with bated breath lest it should openly proclaim Christ. Nor is this its only affliction, for whereas by the uniformity of nature, every religion should, like Christianity, have had another as its herald, and even every great personage a train of precursors to have, as in the case of Christ, opened his way, and forecast his history, the phenomenon stands here alone, and its solitude cannot be accounted for.

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The greatness of ordinary Christianity in the light of prophecy.

In striking contrast to this felt littleness of rationalism, when its Christ is seen through the inverted end of the telescope, is the greatness of the ordinary Christianity, when the anticipative world of prophecy comes into its view, shaded, abrupt, and often impenetrable, but with a light, a harmony, and a grandeur not only sufficient to warrant its own existence, but to attest the stupendous reality that was to come. It would have been possible to have given forth real prophecy that was remote from Christ. Some of it, in one sense, is so; as, for example, the predictions bearing on some of the ancient nations. But the strength of prophecy lies in its chain of references to Christ, from the first mention of the "Seed of the woman" to the virgin-born Immanuel; from the Sufferer, whose heel is bruised in terms of the earliest promise, to the "Man of sorrows" in the fifty-third of Isaiah; and from the peaceful Lawgiver of a yet uncrowned tribe, to the heir of David, who enters the long-established seat of rule as a king. Even the predictions that bear on the Church of God and its universal progress are but the sequel to those which foretell the personal Christ, and they then reflect the light of His exaltation; nor can the judgments on the Jewish nation be dissociated, as the depth of their fall is but the measure of the grace and truth that were in Christ, and for rejecting which they were to be cast away.

The chain of prophetic references to Christ.

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Old Testament prophecy as centralized in Christ.

Thus centralized in Christ, not only sinless, but Divine, and in the fullest sense a Sacrifice and a Saviour, the prophecy of the Old Testament has a meaning, a coherence, a majestic onward movement unparalleled in literature. But in proportion as it is isolated and detached from Christ, the more does all sink into twilight. When He is denied prophecy becomes a mere *ignis fatuus* made up of vain and abortive fancies, flickering in the wastes of a history as flat and stagnant in the Old Testament as in the New, where indeed there is neither old nor new, but, under the boasted name of evolution, an eternal sameness, and the reign of the dreary inevitable law, "Ex nihilo nihil fit."

As detached from Christ.

Evidence from Divine wisdom in Christianity gathers up in Christ.

3. It is not difficult to show how the mass of evidence in Christianity that builds upon the Divine *wisdom* as shining forth in it, must also gather around the person and work of Jesus Christ. If the argument from design leads us to trace a Designer in nature, it does so not less in the economy of revelation. Christianity has a work to do or a problem to solve; and though the unbeliever cannot enter into this survey as the believer can, yet even he may see contrivance in salvation, and be self-condemned for rejecting it.

Argument from design in Christianity.

The union of Divine and human in Christ proof of adaptation.

Now, it is exactly in relation to Christ that this argument from adaptation comes in. The union in Christ of divinity and humanity is not a mere theological dogma or mystery, but an intelligible

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and practical arrangement for gaining the ends of salvation. Every one can see that if such a conjunction be possible, however the abstract theism of Judaism, of Mohammedanism, and we may add, of a rationalized Christianity, recoils from it, there are many beautiful fitnesses instantly impressed upon any saving scheme. The very appearance of Divinity on the field indicates the greatness and danger of the crisis produced by sin; and this, being thus laid down to start with, in harmony with the deepest voice of conscience, carries the resources of Deity everywhere—its strength and its tenderness—to meet at successive points the exigency, and to afford the guarantee that these shall not be applied in vain.

The presence of Divinity in the field proves the greatness of the danger.

While the higher nature of Christ thus yields an unlimited reserve of power and grace, it is seen to be fitting that human sympathies and organs should also mingle in the work of man's redemption. How these were to be harmonized we could not have told beforehand; indeed we can hardly tell now that the God-man is before us. But that in this incarnation—the central and fundamental fact of Christianity—there is a wealth and a fulness of adaptation, otherwise altogether inconceivable, to remedial ends, the consent of the Christian Church in all ages attests. The so-called offices of Christ are filled in with a grandeur and completeness self-evidently true Revelation rises to its highest

The fitness of the co-operation of human nature in the work of redemption

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The culminating point of revelation

Vicarious suffering.

Universal dominion.

point in one who is not merely a messenger, but a partaker, of divinity. Vicarious suffering for sin becomes possible in human form, yet clothed with transcendent and illimitable merit. A universal dominion founded on grace enchains the affections, while it transforms the lives, of its subjects. These provisions of Christianity strike all fair and open minds by their wisdom not less than by their grandeur and tenderness; and though they are resisted and overborne by the very evil they are designed to remedy, they not less leave their witness, and widely diffuse the secret, though, alas! in how many cases ineffectual, conviction that this religion is divine.

Christ the strength of the whole system.

But is it not clear that the strength of this evidence is derived from the dependence of this whole system on Christ? It is made up of the power and sympathy of His incarnation, of the efficacy of His sacrifice, of the perfection of His example, and of the influence of His reign. And to deny that Christ, as He moves in the Gospel history, is the Author and Finisher of all, and to resolve all, were that possible, into some more obscure and transcendental action of the general divine will, would be to eclipse this whole argument from the manifold wisdom of God, and could only be exceeded in disaster by the denial of the end, not less than of this grand effectual means, so as to leave only a morality and a bare naturalism as the last issue of

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the so-called Gospel dispensation, without anything of redemption at all.

Argument from the history of redemption.

The wisdom that shines in the remedial provisions of Christianity is not less discernible in its history. Redemption grows from the faintest outline as a revelation to the perfect day. The history of the world unconsciously prepares for it. A special people rise up to guard quite as much as to develope it. Every step in their history is singular, and the occasional periods of it that want the miraculous are like the silent pauses out of which it is again born. When Christ's advent has filled the old channels to overflowing, it has to burst upon the world; and this law marks all its subsequent expansions, that it is a return of the life-blood to the heart that sends it forth again in fresh and ever-widening diffusion. There is not the least doubt that all the successive steps of Jewish history, from Abraham to Moses, from Moses to David, from David to the close of prophecy, and from the close of prophecy to the Incarnation, lead up to Christ, and become epochs from their relation to Him. So, also, if the history of the Christian Church teaches any lesson, it is that the recovery of clearness, of power, of victory, lies in His name, and that the greatness of every truly great age, in doctrine or in work, lies in its prominence.

Successive steps leading up to Christ.

The name of Christ the power of growth and recovery in the Church.

How could this be unless Christ were the key to the whole of this progress, for progress, in spite

Christ the key of the whole progress.

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of unaccountable stops and even recessions, we must call it; and is there not here in the history, as truly as in the doctrine, a veiled yet discoverable wisdom, which centres in the supernatural Christ, and shows Him to be alike the moving force and the last end of this apparently untraceable but really all-including system? The evidences from wisdom in Christianity and in connexion with it, may need reflection; but they are among the most solid, appealing to minds like Pascal and Butler, like Edwards and Neander, that can take in the sweep of a wide though in many parts inscrutable scheme; and of all the light that is in it—more than enough to counterbalance the darkness—the origin is to be found in Christ.

The solidity of the evidences from wisdom in Christianity.

4. We now come to the *fourth* and crowning argument for the truth of Christianity, that drawn from the reflection in it of the moral attributes of holiness and love in God. Here, pre-eminently, the argument is wrought up with, and centres in, the life and work of Jesus Christ. We have here to start with the unspeakable advantage of a personal God in whom the moral law is enshrined. This is carried over from Judaism, with its faith alike in Jehovah and in the Decalogue; and thus religion and morality spring up together. A shadow of this is found in the teaching of Plato, who makes virtue the imitation of God, and in Kant, who makes it obedience to sovereign will: but in

Argument from the holiness and love manifested in Christianity.

The argument centres in Christ.

Religion and morality

Plato and Kant.

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the one, the element of law is too feeble; in the other, the personality of God is lost in moral order.

More wonderful perhaps is the glimpse of Plato amidst the darkness of paganism, into the indissoluble union between morality and religion, than the re-discovery by Kant, amid the obscured light of Christianity, of duty as an eternal, inviolable law. But Christianity starts with both a personal God and a moral law, and with both in their deepest principles and demands, which Christ has then to fulfil. He has to resemble or glorify God, not by the harmony of ordinary obedience, but by the bearing of penalty; for there is no law in the universe, if penalty can be lightly set aside.

Christ meets the demands of morality and law.

Those have totally mistaken the life of Christ, who, like Renan, have made it mainly genial or idyllic; or, like others, have seen in it only the evolution in normal circumstances of moral excellence. The solitude, the shadow, the cry proclaim the burden and the woe—a heart filled with all human discords and sorrows not its own, yet accepting all with meekness and love—a meekness and love that bow to the stroke of righteousness, and feel that to avert it from man is the greatest of divine tasks and favours. Thus the colour of Christ's virtue is all sacrificial—red with the mark of blood, and yet transcendently greater than had it borne other wrong and contumely, but not the sin of the world. Out of the depths of this

The true character of Christ's life.

Christ's virtue sacrificial.

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His devotion to God and compassion to man.

crushed and lonely heart there rises to heaven the fragrance of an unutterable devotion to God, and of an unfathomable compassion to man—a purity, a tenderness, a strength of sublime endurance, which float their influence downward through all time, and fill eternity with their memories. Ere long it is seen that this life and death, thus construed, are worthier of the Son of God, and adjust themselves better to the level of incarnation, than any other achievement of virtue; and while in the lower ranges of this history all human graces and sympathies find a home and a shelter, it is in this aspect that it towers to the very firmament, and sends down its floods of moral influence to make all things new.

Repentance produced by the penal sufferings of Christ.

It is the penal sufferings of the Lamb of God, and not the brightness of His other moral features, that strike the heart with the pangs of repentance, that melt the heart while they break it; and in reproducing something of His own agony in the soul, originate a moral crisis there which issues not in death, but in life. Then the attractions of obedience enchain the heart, when the sense of terror and of shame has given place to gratitude and moral admiration; and the imitation of Christ, so awful and even intolerable, when it lays upon the soul a new bondage of duty, becomes easy and irresistible when it is the effusion of love. No heart will open till the bar of guilt be first burst

The attractions of obedience.

Guilt must be removed.

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asunder; and though there be also a key needed to turn the lock by which human nature and habit are fixed in evil, it is Christ who, by the power of His Spirit, can accomplish this further extrication, yet not by other instrumental means than by the lesson of His atoning life and death, divinely urged and made the watchword of moral freedom.

Deliverance effected by Christ.

Thus a perfect moral example, at the very point where it reaches its highest perfection, begins by its own surpassing charm of condescension and tenderness, to work on the lowest and most fallen, and to invite them up the steeps of its own grandeur and purity; whence we see the falsehood of the current idea, that the example which is most like ourselves, and the least raised above our own struggles and falls, is the best, at least for beginners in the race of holiness. The whole experience of the Christian Church refutes this. Who have acted with the greatest power on our degraded and criminal classes? Not their own companions, striving like themselves to raise their heads above the wide surrounding sea of evil; but the holiest men and women, who have come to them as ministering angels, who have recalled the image of good in all its loveliness, and by associating all with self-sacrificing kindness have given them the hope and the possibility of escape, otherwise almost as remote as if they had been abandoned for ever. Of this law of the attraction of

The effect of a perfect example.

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The attraction of the holy.

the holy—if it be supremely kind, still more if it bring the news of pardon—Christ is the limit; and hence as of old to the publicans and sinners, and to all the wide family of the outcast and the miserable, He stretches down His loving arms, and high as He rises above them, He can still reach their level, and lift them upward with the call, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest."

Christ's example never removed from the cross.

It is a mighty proof of the blending of Divine holiness and love in Christ's remedial work, that His example never shifts away from those earliest lessons of the cross which first give peace to the troubled conscience, and then awake the trembling throb of a new and heaven-born existence. Christ has nothing greater to show, nothing more advanced to inculcate in the wide range of His own moral obedience. There has been a school even of Christian theology and morality which has hastened away from Christ's death to His life; as if in the region of moral precept, whether more rare or more familiar, when the awful eclipse of suffering were lifted off, divine excellence shone out with a more winning and cheering ray. This is, however, to forget that the loftiest virtues of Christ start from the vale of humiliation; that the eye which reads in His sacrifice afresh the promise of pardon, receives with equally new welcome the quick succeeding charge, "Follow

His virtues spring from this humiliation.

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thou Me!" and that, while every virtue of Christ has its place and its lesson, those that come associated with the tenderest memories alike of His life and of ours must wing the soul nearest to heaven.

The problem for deniers of Christ's divinity.

Here, then, is the problem for all moralists, reformers, teachers of the world, who deny the Divine Christ. By what miracle of selection were the Bible writers who have drawn that stupendous picture, led to connect all the transforming power of their system, not with separate precepts or laws of God, but with a living Saviour; and then how came it that when the more bright, serene, unshaded virtues of His life appeared to demand a more exhilarating and joyous pursuit, they with sure instinct, while not neglecting these, gave them the second place, and found the deepest, purest, most unfailing well of all moral aspiration and impulse beneath the dark, and as it might even seem repulsive, shade of the Cross and of the sepulchre! To this day this is to the world a mystery and a stumbling-block. But the laws of Christianity are not on that account suspended; their authority is not overthrown—"I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless, I live."

Christianity reconciles holiness and love.

The last wonder of Christianity then, as a remedy, is that it sets forth in God, and in Christ as the image of God, the supreme demands, at first sight irreconcilable, yet truly reconciled, of holiness and of love. Amidst the storm and surge of sin, the

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The holiness of God.

holiness of God rises like a frowning wall to shut up every avenue to the regions of safety, and to wreck and dash in pieces every human hope. It is as when Ulysses, flung from the broken ship, was tossed day after day upon the boiling ocean, more afraid even of the breakers which revealed the land than of the billows which formed the peril of the sea. It is the picture of a soul driven by the resistless tide of guilt against the eternal laws which guard the universe. But at length a rent is opened in the mighty barrier, where the gentle stream divides even the encircling rock; and by this unlooked-for inlet safety and shelter are found. It is the emblem of Heaven's greatest discovery—of the soul's best deliverance, the victory of love, not by breaking down and overturning justice, but by opening a pathway through it to salvation, as wonderful as it is easy and effectual.

Oayssey v. 441.

The victory of love.

All evidence converges to the life and character of Jesus Christ.

Here, then, is the summation of this cumulative argument, where every other evidence converges to the life and character of Jesus Christ. What other religion has such a mass of evidence in its favour, historic, prophetic, doctrinal, moral? What other religion, if it had any to adduce, could centralize all in the person of its Founder? Not Confucianism; not Buddhism (attractive though in one sense the record of its founder be); not Brahminism, which has no commanding personality in its history; and as little Mohammedanism. These religions lie

Contrast with other religions.

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mainly outside the lives of their human authors. Why did not their authors in this way make these religions more strong, interesting, and likely to endure? They were as able on human principles as the original or secondary founders of Christianity, who here also strike clear off from philosophy, for what philosophy ever thought of constituting itself out of the biography of Socrates or Zeno, of Descartes or Hegel? If it had been a failure in the history of religion, the experiment would still have been singular. But it has been the secret of success, and could not fail to be so; for a religion, with the living God in the heart of it, could not rise to anything higher, more unchanging, more attractive than its one incessant theme of Divine Redemption, nor could the gracious Providence which presided over its origin fall short of making its development and career as effectual, while as unexampled, as its birth.

With philosophical systems

Christianity a success because centralized in Christ.

When we speak of the wonderfulness of Christianity we must not neglect the future. It only among religions has at once an Alpha and an Omega. The future alone shall bring out its great proportions. It is said that in our century for the first time the master-works of Handel are fully disclosed as he conceived them. Their airs penetrate through vaster spaces; their choruses are borne up by mightier instruments and voices. So shall it be, if the comparison may be permitted,

The future of Christianity.

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with that grander "Messiah" which is now, amidst incredible struggle, breaking out in living music throughout the world. We have been long in the earlier parts, awed no doubt and cheered by the glorious strains, "Unto us a child is born;" "He shall feed His flock like a shepherd;" Come unto Him, all ye that labour; but sunk also to the deepest minors, "Thy rebuke hath broken His heart," and perplexed in our strongest faith by the tremendous jars and discords, "All they that see Him laugh Him to scorn." But there shall come, like the sweep of innumerable armies, or the march of light, the unbounded, resistless advance, "Their line is gone out into all lands;" and the stupendous all-triumphant chorus shall shake earth and heaven: "Hallelujah, for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth!" In these "great voices" may it be given to us, not without earlier note of preparation, to bear a part; and may it be, though with broken utterance, yet with true and growing concord, that we — all unworthy — now rehearse this grandest burst of time and prelude of eternity: The kingdom of this world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign for ever and ever.

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ARGUMENT

FOR

CHRISTIANITY

FROM

THE EXPERIENCE OF CHRISTIANS.

BY

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Argument of the Tract.

THE place and nature of the argument are indicated. Objections to it are met and answered. It is shown that Christians are conscious of what is not less than a miracle in passing through the great change. The antagonism which they once felt to Christianity, whether they have come out of Judaism or heathenism, or were nominal Christians, is acknowledged. This antagonism is not disproved by the case of those who cannot remember the date when their Christian life seemed to begin. In their case it only began at a period antecedent to the working of memory. Their sense of reaction and struggle proves to them that there was an original antagonism which seeks to regain the mastery.

The Christian's consciousness of antagonism to Christianity is succeeded by a consciousness of harmony with it, and responds to the statements of Scripture describing it as a new creation. It is shown that according to the testimony of men of all schools, Churches exist only to originate and develope this harmony with the will of Christ. The writings of the first Christians are appealed to as proof that they regarded the change through which they had passed as having the nature of an inward miracle, and the agreement with their view by later partakers of their faith is referred to. It is further shown that the change involved in Christian experience authenticates Christianity as a revelation, since it is the fulfilment of prophecy, and confirms the argument for Christianity derived from the supernatural character of the life and work of Christ. Finally, the uses of the argument from Christian experience are set forth.

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ARGUMENT FOR
CHRISTIANITY
FROM THE EXPERIENCE OF CHRISTIANS.

A LARGE place has always been given in the defence of Christianity as a divine revelation to the so-called experience of Christians, but perhaps it has not been so fully discussed, especially in recent times, as some other branches of the Christian argument. This, I think, is much to be regretted, as it has a use of its own for which nothing can compensate. In this Tract I shall endeavour, as briefly as possible, to state this argument, and then I shall touch on some of the special purposes which it is fitted to serve.

Christian experience as an argument for Christianity.

What this Tract endeavours to do.

Generally, then, it may be said, that this can only be a separate argument for Christianity by presenting some special fact or facts connected with it, and which prove it to be divine. These facts are roughly described as "Christian experience?" But what, in this connexion, is "Christian

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What Christian experience is.

experience?" It is the inward change, which every Christian has gone through, as he himself knows it, and which, thus knowing it, he traces up to God. If there were no such change, this argument would not exist; or if it were so obscure that it could not be read, the argument would be comparatively feeble. But to all who hold that Christianity makes a mighty change, and that it is legible to the inward eye, the materials of this argument exist.

Difference between the argument from experience and the argument from the success of Christianity.

But it is, perhaps, at once objected, Has not this argument been already discussed, under the name of the success or propagation of Christianity? And is it not a kind of juggle to bring it in again under the name of Christian experience? This, however, is not so. The argument from success or propagation is founded upon open historical facts, patent to all the world, and in the main upon facts that establish a predominance of Christianity in public struggles, and wide-spread movements reaching through centuries. The argument from experience is founded upon inward phenomena known to the consciousness of the individual. He may live in a cloudy and dark day, but in his own soul a light has risen that transcends every other. He may have belonged to a country in which the gospel has been drowned in blood; but his last experience of it is that of perfect satisfaction and immortal hope, so that the cause, which seems

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lost, to him is gained. It is this interior view, which is independent of numbers, or historical progress, or earth-shaking victories, that is relied upon; and the Christian who would believe, that though he were the only surviving convert, he would be a monument of the mighty power of God, is the kind of example that we require.

How the objection to the argument as private and mystical is to be met.

It may be objected farther that this argument is private and mystical, that it brings in considerations which are not matters of universal consciousness, and which are not debateable upon the common footing of human intelligence. It remains to be seen, after the statement of the argument, whether this really be so, or how far there is a side of this question which is truly world-wide and open to men of every age and nationality; and it remains to be further seen whether the word "mystical" as applied to Christian experience, may still be protected by the analogies of intuitive knowledge, which, though resting on inward experience, is still raised above delusion and error, or even of special endowments, like those of musical or literary sensibility, which are valid to those who possess them, though to large masses of the uninitiated non-existent, or, in their own case, so dim as to count for nothing.

Analogies of intuitive knowledge and special endowments.

Only one other bar to this argument may exist in the minds of some reasoners, in consequence

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of a misunderstanding. They may suppose that it is an attempt to make Christian experience an argument for itself, which would be an illogical and incoherent procedure. It is freely granted that this is inadmissible, and were it attempted would have only insecure results. Whatever originates Christian experience must be handled in a distinct argument, or set of arguments. It is on the resulting phenomenon that this argument before us must rely. As a house cannot be employed to build itself, so Christian experience cannot be employed in this way. It may and must become an argument, when the Christian change is effected, and as it grows. But in the nature of things change cannot originate itself. There is a power in the Word of God which appeals to a susceptibility in the heart of man, as yet un-Christian, to be moved by it. This has sometimes been called the argument from Christian experience; but though this self-evidencing power is a reality, it is not happily described as an argument from Christian experience; and therefore I shall endeavour in what follows, to search out in the actual experiences of those who have become real Christians, the elements of an argument which may, while allowing for the place of every other, maintain its own distinctness and value.

The resulting phenomenon, not the originating cause of Christian experience, relied on in this argument.

The elements of the argument derived from Christian experience.

The sources of this argument are not all of one

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kind ; for the features of change in the history of Christians stand in different relations to the supernatural, so that they may be brought into contact with it at different points, at each of which they form parts of one complex argument for the Divine origin of Christianity. I shall, however, arrange them under the following propositions, beginning with that which is most prominent—the working in Christian experience of Divine power.

The sources of the argument various.

I. *First*, I say, that *the experience of Christians in passing through the change which all undergo involves a consciousness, which is not less than that of miracle.* This is the main thesis of this argument; but, in supporting it, I shall now break it up into separate propositions.

The main thesis of the argument.

(1) There has been in all Christians *a consciousness of innate antagonism to Christianity.* I shall take first that of those Christians in whom this will not be denied; and then that of others, in whom there may seem some ground for questioning it.

Consciousness of innate antagonism to Christianity.

Let us begin, then, with those vast multitudes of Christians who once felt a conscious and all too real antagonism to Christianity, and who have passed through what has been to themselves a sensible and memorable conversion. This must be the case of all who have come out of some other religion or system, as Judaism in its last development as hostile to Christianity, as all the forms of

Converts from other religions or systems.

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Paganism, ancient and modern, as Atheism, and all the types of unbelief which deny Christ's mission in any sense, as Mohammedanism, which formally admits it, but makes it void, and all the grades of heresy which do not contain enough of saving truth to produce Christian experience. This body of proselytes is already a large contingent of the ultimately true Christian Church. To this class belong the Apostle Paul and most of his converts, Justin Martyr and Clement of Alexandria, who came over from a cultured Paganism, the Earl of Rochester and Lord Lyttleton from modern unbelief, Neander from modern Judaism, Tholuck and Hengstenberg from Rationalism, and the innumerable converts on the field of recent missions, many of whom have become preachers of the Gospel. But a far larger body of this class have been born of nominally Christian parents, and have more or less received a Christian education. Very many of these have, till they became Christians indeed, lived in open sin and visible alienation from all semblance of Christian life and earnestness; and their conversion has had in it something marked and discernible, not only to themselves but to others. A large number also have shown beforehand the outward effect of Christian training in the possession of some measure of Christian knowledge, in attention to the forms of religion, and in a life of comparative decorum; but they have

Converts from Judaism, cultured Paganism, modern unbelief, etc.

Nominal Christians.

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been as to the great ends of existence unspiritual, and to their own inward eye, if not to the observation of others, at discord with living Christianity.

Now when one and all of those who form these vast masses of nominal adherents of Christianity, including those who have outwardly forsaken it at the one extremity, and those who have seemed to come nearer it at the other, actually undergo the Christian change, and come with proselytes from still darker regions into the inward pale, so that they become members of Christ's true flock, what is the verdict which they unanimously pass upon their former life and character? Is it not that of antagonism, and radical antagonism, to the truth as in Christ? They cannot call it by any other name than darkness, enmity, death. They acknowledge that they had no true and effectual persuasion, even of the things which had been taught them, and that as a matter of fact they had no desire for the benefits of the Gospel which had been brought near them. Hence it was that they repelled the offer of the pardon of their sins through Christ's redemption, and of a new and sanctifying power by the Holy Ghost. They had no real communion with God or desire for it, and whatever religious impressions had at any time been made on them had been stifled and repressed, so that they were practically without God and without hope in the world. This was the end of

The verdict of all true Christians on their former life and character.

They were without God and without hope.

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every awakening of conscience and temporary conflict with a struggling element within them, that their recoil through pride, or evil desire, ending in confirmed unbelief, was stronger than before.

Now it will not be denied that these are the recollections of untold multitudes, who have sooner or later become true and earnest Christians. They are written for the earlier Church in Augustine's *Confessions*, and for the modern in Bunyan's *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*. The distinctive feature of this widespread experience is the sharp antagonism of sin and grace. The memory of antagonism is at the foundation of their whole Christian history. As examples amongst innumerable others may be mentioned the great theologian, John Owen, suddenly brought out of deep gloom, by a sermon from an unknown preacher in London, to an experience of that Christian life which he was afterwards with such power to analyse; about a century afterwards John Wesley finding light from a humble Moravian reader of Luther's *Preface to the Romans;* Colonel Gardiner reclaimed in Paris by a wonderful conversion from an openly vicious life, to have his name the watchword as a soldier of Christian loyalty; the two friends, William Cowper and John Newton, each self-described as a monument of Almighty grace, and whose joint tribute to it in the "Olney Hymns" will only perish with the English

Augustine and Bunyan.

Antagonism of sin and grace.

John Owen.

John Wesley.

Colonel Gardiner.

William Cowper and John Newton.

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language; to whom may be added, as of the same circle, Thomas Scott, the commentator, whose passage from ministerial deadness and negative belief is so strongly drawn in his *Force of Truth;* Adam Clarke, rescued by Methodist evangelism, at an early age in the north of Ireland, to be a commentator of equal name; William Hone and Thomas Cooper, in the last generation, and in this, reclaimed from passionate unbelief to be one the quiet confessor, and the other the public advocate of Christianity all over England. Let me close with a different name, Stephen Grellet, who passes from among the *noblesse* of the first French Revolution to the graver work of an American Friend, sending a Christian nurse to Thomas Paine in his last illness, and finding admission alike to Popes and crowned heads, to talk of the interests which had now displaced every other.

Thomas Scott.

Adam Clarke.

Hone and Cooper.

Stephen Grellet.

Nor will the existence of this antagonism, in a true and awful sense in the human heart, be disproved by facts of an apparently opposite character. There are many Christians who have been trained from their earliest years to understand and revere the Gospel, who have embraced Christianity with love and gratitude, as enforced by the consistent example of believing parents or other relatives and friends, and who have not only accepted all these doctrines and outward usages, but who have been taught to pray to a Father in Heaven through a

Cases of early piety.

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Divine and living Saviour, and who have found through this communion the sense of pardon and the supply of strength for Christian duty. What does this, however, establish in regard to the non-existence of an original element of antagonism in Christians? Only that it might have been removed and overcome at a period antecedent to the working of memory, and that as conversion may be so real as entirely to change the character, the change may begin so soon as hardly to be distinguished from that which is earliest in nature. If there be two sets of facts which need to be harmonized with each other, which is the most rational explanation, that which supposes that only a portion of the human race are born with this antagonism with which they are so burdened, or that all have this heritage, but in the case of some it is by a happy influence earlier subdued? The view of a universal repulsion becomes a certainty, when it is found that in the case of the early converts the victory is sadly incomplete, that there are many reactions and falls into evil, darkening whole passages of their life, and that only by painful struggle and sore warfare, resembling the conversions of others, do these earlier disciples return to the path of consistency with their own professions and experiences. I am not here borrowing this explanation from cases in Scripture, or from general assertions in it, which include every type of character. I am pointing out

Antagonism overcome antecedent to the working of memory.

Incompleteness of victory in the case of early converts.

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notorious facts, which are written in the consciousness of those Christians who cannot go back to a date when their Christianity seemed to begin, and who yet know all too well that it has had a wavering and chequered, even though, on the whole, a progressive history. Their own sense of reaction and struggle convinces them, in the same way in which others are convinced, that the Christian experiences are not innate in themselves, but successive to an earlier and hostile domination which seeks to regain the mastery, and no testimony would be more adverse to the theory of an inherent predisposition in any to Christianity, than that of the very persons who have soonest yielded to its influence. As in the Old Testament, the confession, "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity," comes, according to the prevailing view, from David, whose piety was of the earliest date, so in the New Testament, the consent of Timothy, who knew the Scriptures from "a babe," is presupposed by Paul to the assertion that all men need "to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth"; and the Apostle John, who is generally regarded as an example of early conversion, lays down as emphatically as any other the necessity of grace to save from universal depravity. "We love Him because He first loved us." "We know that we have passed from death unto life." "We know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness."

The sense of reaction and struggle in those who were Christians from childhood.

David.

Timothy.

The Apostle John.

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Consciousness of harmony with Christianity after consciousness of antagonism to it.

(2) I remark, *secondly, that the consciousness in all Christians of antagonism to Christianity is succeeded by a consciousness of harmony with it.* I allow, of course, for degrees of development in true Christianity, since nothing is clearer from fact than that one Christian differs greatly from another, and the same Christian from himself in different stages. Nor would I draw any hard and fast line as to the amount of hope or assurance with which a Christian may at any time regard his own condition, as one bearing truly, however imperfectly, the Christian stamp and impress. We must grant that still the Much-afraids and Fearings belong to the race of true pilgrims as really as the Great-hearts and Valiants for the Truth. Still in all Christians, as there is a tendency towards progress, so is there a tendency towards hopefulness; and this we may describe as normal, so that in spite of all remaining conflict, the issue is that of harmony with Christianity displacing antagonism to it. Nor is it going too far to say that the Christian is entitled to look upon the highest point to which he has at any time attained in contrast with the lowest depth whence he started, as an evidence of the truth of Christianity, opening up, as it thus does, a possibility and even a future, which is the mark of a higher than earthly system. But even guarding this statement, as it needs to be guarded,

The degree of hope or assurance felt immaterial.

The tendency to hopefulness in all Christians normal.

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and founding only on the habitual difference between the former and present state of the Christian, there is, more or less, a response to the beautiful utterances of Scripture, "If any man be in Christ, there is a new creation: the old things are passed away; behold, they are become new;"[1] "ye were darkness, but are now light in the Lord;" "ye, who sometime were far off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ." The poles of existence have been reversed, and at every point the change reveals itself. Through the all-embracing, all-transforming principles of faith, Christ's word dominates in the convictions, regenerates the affections, re-moulds the active desires and purposes, so that it is a compendious description of this new life to say, "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me!" It is needless to enlarge on a newly-begotten harmony like this, which, though it may be painted too brightly as to its actual sweetness, is still, and justly, the theme of so much preaching; which is so great that it can never become common-place or indifferent, not to say that in the living Church its interest is kept up by perpetual accessions. Indeed, by the consent of men of the most opposite schools of thought, churches exist only to originate and develope this harmony with the will of Christ; and their ministers and ordinances, if they have any

The effects of Christ's words through faith.

Churches exist to produce harmony with the will of Christ.

[1] 2 Cor. v. 17, R.V.

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function at all, are continued and renewed only to diffuse it. Thus the author of *Ecce Homo* says,

> "When the power of reclaiming the lost dies out of the Church, it ceases to be the Church. It may remain a useful institution, though it is most likely to become an immoral and mischievous one. Where the power remains, there—whatever is wanting—it may be said that 'the tabernacle of God is with man.'"[1]

World-wide renewal demanded by Christianity.

From the opposite extreme, the same testimony to a world-wide renewal as demanded by Christianity, amidst all practical defection and failure, comes. Some years ago, when going into the bye-ways of a much-travelled part of Rhenish Prussia, I clambered up to the top of a hill, where with a tall cathedral in the midst, there stood an open square, surrounded by a wall, against which leaned an old wooden crucifix, with these lines carved upon it:

> "Ex hoc crucis signo, ex hoc crucis ligno,
> Venit penitenti, et contritæ menti,
> Flos virtutis, fons salutis."[2]

How Christians regard the inward change.

(3) I remark, *thirdly, that all Christians regard the change, of which they are thus conscious, as having the nature of an inward miracle.*[3] To this

[1] p. 243.

[2] From this cross, the tree of shame,
From this cross, the cure of blame,
Comes to each repenting soul,
By a contrite faith made whole,
Virtue's flower, Salvation's dower!

[3] I use the word "miracle" in this discussion advisedly. All Christians are agreed that the work of the Holy Ghost has

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consciousness, the first Christians give clear and unequivocal utterance. I do not appeal now to their writings as inspired, for I am treating their words at this point solely as testimonies of human experience. Only it is worthy of notice, that in regarding this change as wrought by a special Divine power, they believed that they were interpreting the mind of their Master, who had pronounced on one of the first confessors the benediction, "Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father which is in heaven," who had promised to all His disciples the Spirit of truth, "whom the world could not receive;" and who had also announced that the same Spirit should act on the world to change it, by "convincing the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment." The first Christians accordingly had expected something marvellous in the working of spiritual power; they waited to be "endued" with it "from on high;" and on the Day of Pentecost, in answer, as they believed, to their prayers,

The teaching of Christ.

What the first Christians expected.

in it a supernatural element, and that Christianity, however certain it be, and most important, that it acts by means of the truth, as is affirmed by all who deal with this question, and by none more than by our Lord Himself, would never accomplish its grand and soul-saving work, without a new force from a higher sphere, which is super-added to all other moral energies. It is this great fact, without going into further theory, which the word "miracle" is here employed to record with serious emphasis; and thus explained, its use will hardly be controverted.

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it came, even with outward signs, but with a yet mightier force of inward transformation. All through the Acts of the Apostles, this mysterious energy is recognised; and in the Apostolical Epistles, where its working is more fully described, it is spoken of as truly of the nature of miracle. Thus, in a passage already referred to,[1] it is compared to creation: "If any man be in Christ, there is a new creation."[2] And again,[3] "We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works." The miracle of resurrection and ascension is also declared to be repeated:[4] "God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." Nay, in connexion with this emblem, to show that it is no mere figure, but a reality, the power in question is declared to be of the same miraculous kind which literally raised the Saviour:[5] "And what is the exceeding greatness of His power to usward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power, which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places." I need

The mysterious energy recognised in the Acts and Epistles.

The nature of the power.

[1] 2 Cor. v. 17. [2] R.V., *alternative.*
[3] Eph. ii. 10. [4] Eph. ii. 4–7.
[5] Eph. i. 19, 20.

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hardly mention that another element of the supernatural, such as moved the incredulity of Nicodemus, enters with the figure of a second birth; for this image, which was more than once used by Christ Himself, re-appears in the teaching of His Apostles. Thus,[1] "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." So,[2] "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin," and in other places. And the Apostle James[3] traces the character and destiny of Christians to the same Divine birth, "of His own will begat He us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of His creatures."

The figure of the second birth.

I have quoted these testimonies in order to show how strong and uniform is the inference which is drawn by the first expounders of Christianity from their own experiences to a supernatural power working in the Church; and this view is evidently taken up and backed by those around them who professed to be partakers of their faith; for how could these statements have been universally regarded as true and canonical if no such thing had been generally known and admitted even by those who claimed to be Christians? By publishing these accounts of Christian experience, as implying miracle, these first writers placed themselves at the bar of Christian consciousness;

The universal belief of the early Christians in a supernatural power working in the Church.

The first Christian writers at the bar of Christian consciousness.

[1] 1 Pet. i. 23. [2] 1 John iii 9. [3] i. 18.

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and the fact that their descriptions are to this day accepted as authentic and indisputable makes the whole Christian body a voucher for the miraculous in its own subsequent experience. Were it not so, would not the Christian Church have given up these claims to the supernatural altogether, as too high-flown to have in them any reality at all, or have so reduced them as to make them fall within the line of mere ordinary persuasion and natural influence? The constant reading of the Bible, then, in Christian worship is from century to century an ever-renewed protestation that these wonders of moral creation, resurrection, and second birth are going on as of old, and are either great facts or grievous delusions. Nor is it only in the continued reading of Scripture texts, and the founding of sermons upon them, pointed so as to include a present miracle, that these utterances soar so high. In the prayers of the Church for the same working, and in the solemn thanksgiving in which it is acknowledged, there is a complete identification in this respect of the present days with the past. The most effectual, too, of creeds—the living hymns of the Church—repeat the same sense of Divine operation; and of these hymns there are none which more eloquently attest it than those that are directly addressed to the Holy Ghost, such as the "*Veni Creator Spiritus*," ascribed to Charlemagne, and

The continuance of the wonders of moral creation.

The sermons, prayers and hymns of the Church renew this sense of the Divine operation.

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taken up into all Christian hymnology, and the not less exquisite one of Robert II., of France, one verse especially of which was appealed to by the Reformers, as witnessing for the more earnest view of spiritual influence which after the decay of the Middle Ages they sought to revive:

> "Sine tuo numine
> Nihil est in homine,
> Nihil est innoxium."[1]

The need of regeneration and sanctification.

This dependence of a humanity confessedly depraved and fallen upon the regenerating and sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit has been, as an article of universal Christian belief and experience, undoubtedly strengthened by the controversies which have taken place in regard to it in the history of Christianity. These it is not necessary in a tract like this to recapitulate, arising, as they have done, not merely from the resistance of nominal Christians in the Christian Church to a doctrine in every form offensive to human pride and self-sufficiency, but also from the anxieties of Christians themselves not to suffer the doctrines of Divine grace and human responsibility, which they equally sought to hold, to encroach upon each other. How far the confessedly great difficulties of this problem as a

The doctrines of Divine grace and human responsibility.

[1] "For without Thee nought we find
Pure or strong in human kind,
Nought that has not gone astray."
MACGILL, *Songs of the Christian Life*, p. 55.

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question of theology have been surmounted, it is not for me here to say; but I am convinced that at no former period was there a greater practical anxiety among all sections of Christians to deal in earnest with the words of the oldest creed, the Apostolic so-called, "I believe in the Holy Ghost," and to hold up what is found in the 7th article of the "Evangelical Alliance," "the work of the Holy Spirit in the conversion and sanctification of the sinner." Hence I think that were a Christian anywhere, on appealing to his own experiences of inward change as a proof of a Divine working upon his soul, to be met with the reply on the part of one who did not profess to be a Christian, that there was in all this nothing more than the power of self-originated transition which lay in passing from one political party, or from one school in philosophy, or from one side in any of the fields of art or literature to another, the objector would not find another Christian who would take up and support his argument. It would be felt at once that the antagonism overcome in the Christian change was of a deep and radical character, to which, in the other cases, there was no parallel. A surrender had been demanded for Christ, to which there was nothing equivalent in the acceptance of human leaders and masters, and there had been in the one case a previous thraldom to the world and its lord, and a recoil

Present feeling with reference to the doctrine of the Holy Spirit.

The antagonism overcome in the Christian change deep and radical.

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even from truth and liberty, as the soul came at length to understand them, compared with which all secular partizanship was feeble. Christians, too, have undergone changes from one school in philosophy or science or taste to another; but, in comparison with the Christian change, they will one and all declare that these affected only the surface of their being, that the only revolution had been the Christian, and that across that awful but joyful passage of an eternal deliverance nothing but an Almighty arm could have brought them safely. Amongst earnest Christians the inapplicability of this whole parallel would not admit of serious debate, and any Christian who might seem even to countenance it would lie open to the suspicion that he was himself still in the shallows, and had been only outwardly "baptized in the cloud and in the sea."

Other changes only superficial.

Nor would any more success attend the effort to evade this argument from the felt supernatural nature of the Christian change, by tracing it up to the force of human eloquence or persuasion in those by whom it had been instrumentally helped. No doubt this has its own place amidst Christian influences, as it has in what may be called secular conversions. It belongs to human nature in the sphere of Christian argument, as in other spheres, to be moved by sympathy and melted by tears. But such an origin of the ultimate difference

The force of eloquence and persuasion no adequate explanation of the Christian change.

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between one hearer and another will not be accepted by any Christian, when it is remembered how often the most persuasive lips have failed, and how "the weak things of the world have been chosen to confound the things that are mighty."

The inherent power of outward revelation without the Holy Spirit inadequate.

Nor would Christians rest in one other explanation, which might seem to detract from the miracle-like origin of Christian conviction and life, that namely which traces it up to the mere inherent power of the outward revelation, without implying any additional energy as exerted by the Divine Spirit. Even that explanation goes beyond a purely naturalistic origin of Christian experience; for it demands a revealed word to act upon the soul, and this—the distinctive feature of Pelagianism, which will grant nothing more—already separates it from an absolutely rationalized and humanly originated Christian experience. Still, as the Christian Church has always felt, this alleged sufficient energy of Scripture, as detached from inward struggles and workings of the Holy Ghost, has constantly been left aside by a living and practical Christianity, and the prayer of the Church has always been that the Gospel might come, "not in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance."[1]

The constant prayer of the Church.

Nor has any practical difficulty been caused to Christians, in accepting and maintaining the con-

[1] 1 Thess. i. 5.

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viction that they were in their inward experiences each the subject of a true miracle, by the fact that the miracle was not abrupt and absolute, but connected with the use of means, and these means, the manifestation of truth to mind and heart. Such a complication in no way excludes the supernatural element of power, any more than the use of food by Elijah excluded the higher vigour that enabled him to go on for forty days to Mount Horeb. In the texts which have been quoted, the presence of the word and the power of the Spirit stand together in the closest association. It is easy to believe that a complex miracle of this kind may be even greater than one involving the immediate exercise of power. Christ is commonly understood to have predicted that His Apostles in their ministry would do greater works than He did,[1] in the sense that their teaching would be accompanied by greater manifestations of the Spirit's power in the conversion of men: "Greater works than these shall he do, because I go unto My Father." As a matter of fact, there is nothing therefore in this conjunction of spiritual energy with human teaching to limit the sense of transcendent obligation implied in the conviction of every Christian, "By the grace of God I am what I am; and the grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain!"

The spiritual miracle connected with the use of means.

Christ's prediction about the work of His Apostles

[1] John xiv. 12.

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Christian experience a fulfilment of prophecy.

II. The *second* general proposition which I lay down is *that the change involved in Christian experience authenticates Christianity, as a revelation, since this change is the fulfilment of prophecy.* Hitherto I have spoken of this change as miracle, and as fulfilling tests and conditions of miracle, so as to supply an additional and most important chapter to that argument. I have now to show that the change that takes place in every Christian is fitted to produce in him all the effect and impression of prophecy. Now in prophecy there are

Three elements in prophecy

three elements, a pre-intimation; a supernatural range; and a fulfilment; and these all meet in Christian experience. The change is announced in the Word of God, it could not be foretold without Divine intelligence; and the forecast comes to pass actually in Christian experience. It is not indeed, as in the ordinary argument from prophecy, that a particular converting change is announced beforehand. It is not said that A. B. or C. will

The continuance of conversion described beforehand.

be turned into a Christian, but the continuance of conversion in the world is described beforehand. This could not be done without Divine foreknowledge of the future; and as one who is not a Christian never seriously believes or even understands these preannouncements, they start up, when in his own case they prove true, with all the effect of supernatural insight. Thus, when any one is, it may be, quite unexpectedly convinced of sin,

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our Lord's prophecy as to the Spirit coming to convince the world of sin, startles as a Divine voice; so again, when the Apostle's divinely-given work is continued in any one of our sinful race, "to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God,"[1] there is the same sense of contact with a divinely-arranged system; or again when, in the most general way, it is declared that "the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation";[2] for here is a sinner in his actual life and history made to experience this, and to see not only a Divine Hand accomplishing it, but writing it beforehand in all the largeness and confidence of a world-wide prophecy of which he himself has become a monument. And not only is there in all converts this element of surprise and confirmation, but the impression is more particularly strengthened where there is set forth some condition to be fulfilled, and when, on the fulfilling of it, the result held out is found to be realised. These may be called promises, but they are also prophecies; and the fulfilment of them strikes with direct efficacy. Thus, when it is promised,[3] "If any man willeth to do His will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it be of God," Christians know that in proportion as they have reached this

The effect of the prophetic description on the awakened soul.

Promises which are prophecies.

[1] Acts xxvi. 18. [2] Rom. i. 16.
[3] John vii. 17, R.V.

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willingness, in the same degree has the truth of Christ's doctrine dawned upon them. So, again, when it is said by Christ,[1] "Learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls," it is the universal experience of Christians that the more lowly, as Christ was, they strive to become, the more do they enter into rest. And once more, in the case of a promise like this, the same result follows,[2] "Ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full." These are but examples of many profound and far-reaching prophecies, and prophecies that make every part of Scripture brighten into an oracle. There is also a further consideration of great importance, that it is not knowledge of the future only that authenticates Scripture, but any knowledge contained in it that transcends the compass of our natural intelligence. And as Scripture thus ministers to the endless self-knowledge of all Christians, revealing to the regenerate all their temptations, infirmities, and falls, and not less their recoveries, struggles, aspirations, and groanings which cannot be uttered, it stretches out like an untravelled continent beyond the ken of our highest literature, and yet supplies even to the unlettered saint a field of discovery—sad and yet most hopeful—which daily assures him that he is in contact with the mind of God.

Examples.

Scripture ministers to the self-knowledge of Christians.

III. The *third* and last proposition which I lay

[1] Matt. xi. 29. [2] John xvi. 24.

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down is *that the argument from the experience of Christians confirms the argument for Christianity derived from the supernatural character of the life and work of Jesus Christ.* Whatever tends to prove Jesus Christ a real and also a more than mortal being, is a contribution to the argument for the Divine origin of the Gospel. It is not enough indeed to prove Him to have been simply historical, for an historical being of the mere reduced proportions of Him who is drawn by Renan or any other of the naturalist school, is no support to the Christ of the Christian Church. But anything which connects this higher and true Christ of Christianity with history is a positive argument. Now, this connexion is established on the field of Christian experience. There is, indeed, independent and earlier evidence for the historical reality of a Christ who transcends all merely natural greatness and goodness. He is proved by the quite unique character of the picture, which, as Rousseau long ago confessed, defies all invention. And still more, he is proved by the narratives of eye-witnesses, which show that the portrait is not a free sketch, but a transcript drawn from reality. If no Church had subsequently been founded at all, that would not have invalidated the historical character of a personality so grand who was attested in such a manner. It would have been a difficulty if He had appeared alone, and seemed to

The argument from experience confirms the argument from the supernatural character of Christ's life and work.

The character of Christ defies invention.

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The succession of disciples bearing His image strengthens the argument for Christ's reality.

fail in His mission, so far as the succession of followers was concerned. But now, by the raising up of a succession of disciples who bear His character and image, the argument for His own reality is indefinitely strengthened. And not only is it strengthened to others, who can see Christianity from the outside, but far more to those who can see it from within, and who, putting together Christ's character and their own, see, that with all their failures, Christ's character so interprets and accounts for their own that they can no more deny that He existed, and was what He was, than they can deny their own existence. Christ, by this living reproduction of Himself in them, as they know themselves, and can compare the picture with what they read, asserts His place in the grand series of historical influences that have moulded the world; and as all Christians are equally affected, the impression is indefinitely enhanced. But this is far from being all; this is not even the most wonderful fact in connexion with this great Person. They believe, one and all of them, that they are actually in contact with a still living Saviour, who has risen from the dead, and who presides over history, according to His own words, "All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth." "Lo, I am with you alway, even to the end of the world." They connect this presence with the promised coming of

Christians in contact with a living Saviour.

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the Holy Spirit, as another Comforter, the representative of Christ, by whom He should dwell in their hearts, and manifest Himself to them, as He does not unto the world; and thus the foundation is laid for prayer, for guidance, for spiritual sympathy, such as cannot connect any other body of men, Brahmans, Buddhists, Mohammedans, with a religious Founder, and which exists in Christianity alone. For this presence the guarantee to the Christian is the possession of the new character, which is the reflection of that of Christ according to His own word: "He that hath My commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me: and he that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love Him, and will manifest Myself to him." To the world which disowns a living and reigning Christ, accessible to prayer, ruling in the hearts of His people, and actually sealing them as His own by this Spirit who dwells and works in them, this may seem altogether transcendental; but to the Christian it is the centre of a new and blessed life; and thus, as a great fact in history, repeated in the experience of all Christians, it vouches for the foregoing fact of Christ's own life in all its real and yet solitary grandeur. The Christian, therefore, must be allowed to dwell on this supreme and governing presence of One who was dead, but is alive for evermore. When Julian was on his march to the

The presence of Christ connected with the coming of the Holy Spirit.

The presence of Christ the centre of a new and blessed life to the Christian.

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Persian war, one of his soldiers asked an aged Christian, according to one of the Church historians, "What is your carpenter doing now?" to which the answer was, "He is making a coffin for your emperor." In the Indian mutiny, a Christian convert, when tortured even to death, on being interrogated, "Where is your Jesus Christ now?" gave this reply, "He is in my heart." It is this ineradicable belief that the Saviour is present by a mysterious but real communion with all true Christians, strengthened by the inward feeling of nearness and likeness, that maintains, as it could not otherwise be maintained, the faith of the Church in His incarnation and earthly history, and seems evermore to fulfil all His own promises or prophecies which guarantee such a contact. "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it." Is this, then, the mere after-glow of a fallen sun, or even the personification of a purely moral guardianship?

Faith in the incarnation and history of Christ maintained by this presence.

"I hear a voice you cannot hear,
I see a hand you cannot see."

IV. Having thus endeavoured as briefly as possible to state the argument from Christian experience for the Divine origin generally of Christianity as a Revelation, I have now to mention *some uses*,

Uses of the argument from experience.

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which in connexion with this great issue it is fitted to serve. I shall confine myself to three. It is a help to establish the sufficiency and supremacy of Holy Scripture. It assists Christians to recognise each other. And it affords a starting-point for impression on the world.

Establishes the sufficiency and supremacy of Holy Scripture.

(1) *The argument from Christian experience helps,* firstly, *to establish the sufficiency and supremacy of Holy Scripture.* Not, indeed, that the very words of Scripture are necessary to convey the truth by which, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, the soul may be inwardly touched and changed. The words of a human minister or friend, freely translating and with general fidelity re-producing those of Scripture, have often been effectual; and thus the witness borne by saving changes is not to the bare letter of Scripture; nor has the Romanist against the Protestant any topic of alarm, as if without an infallible Church, and a minutely watchful tradition, no one could be sure of what he believed. But while this is true, so true that by a single verse of Scripture, and that not re-produced accurately in detail, a soul may be converted, it is not less true that, as a matter of fact, saving changes are far more frequently originated in connexion with texts of Scripture than in any other way, and Christians come to learn that what is most central and decisive in their experience is built up far more by the direct teaching of

Conversions generally connected with texts of Scripture.

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Scripture than through human variations upon it. In this way the external evidence of the Canon as resting upon the testimony of those who claim to speak with authority as Christ's apostles, or otherwise qualified witnesses, is greatly helped by the remembrance of what these words have been to, and done for, those to whom they have come with power; and as the experience of Christians is substantially the same, there is thus a *consensus*, as a matter of fact and induction, respecting the books that have commended themselves to the conscience, and have been received not as the word of man, but as "the word of God, which effectually worketh in them that believe." Thus, while on the one hand the awful prerogative cannot be claimed for the words of the sacred writings as the vehicle of inspiration exclusively to convey saving influence, or for the Church to watch over and define that vehicle with unerring authority; on the other hand, that which can claim the homage due to inspiration is, by its effects on the soul, still more visibly exalted, and the testimony of Christians with reference to such effects converges with a prevailing consent upon the writings which are by other indications singled out as recording the revelation of God. This witness to Scripture, by its enlightening, sanctifying, and comforting effects upon the souls of believers, I understand to be the *testimonium spiritus Sancti*

Consensus about books that have commended themselves to the conscience.

The testimonium spiritus Sancti.

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so celebrated in the theology and in the confessions of the Reformation.

Mutual recognition of Christians.

(2) *The argument from Christian experience has a second use in enabling Christians to recognise each other.* This recognition might be brought about for its own sake, and it is obvious that it would be an end worthy of God, both for its bearing on the Divine glory, and for the joy that it would give to Christians when they found that they were not alone in the world, but were children of the same family, and servants of the same Lord. There is an element of higher romance than existed in the days of chivalry in the way in which Christians come, in the greatest outward disguise to discover their common knighthood, and to breathe their loyalty to each other. But this is a more than accidental privilege and kindling of hearts. The Christian Church is based on this recognition, for, without this common character thus revealed, Christians could not be formed into a Christian Church, for the confession, the communication, and the increase of the faith. It would be possible upon this use of a common character to found another argument for the Divine origin of a religion which reveals a wisdom transcending all parallel; for the possession of national character does not so qualify for national duties, or the more external affinities and watchwords of other religions so fit their votaries to

The Christian Church based on the mutual recognition of Christians.

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The depth and cohesion of the elements of unity in Christian society.

stand by and even to suffer for each other. In the Christian society the elements of unity go down to the depths of being, and produce a cohesion over which death has no power. Hence there has been something marvellous in the sudden and yet self-evidencing unveilings of Christians to each other. One illustration will serve for a thousand. When the Rev. William Ellis was going out in his later years to Madagascar, a drowning man was picked up by the vessel, who had fallen from another ship. It was some time before he could speak, and when he could, it was in a language entirely strange. At length Mr. Ellis recognised in it the speech of a far-away South-Sea group, with which his youthful labours had made him familiar, and found in the rescued man a Christian brother. Thus are Christians, as all using the speech of Canaan, fitted to be formed into visible churches, based on the recognition of Christian character; and though differences remain, these only enhance the underlying unity. Nor are these without another use, for they teach Christians a lesson of charity, when they see that it is not the plan of Christ that all His true people should throughout agree; and they learn also by a comparison of their agreements and differences with Scripture, that they agree in that which is most important and differ in that which is less vital. Thus the tendency of personal experience

Mr. Ellis of Madagascar and the South Sea Islander.

Christian unity enhanced by differences.

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to run into self-confidence and individualism is checked by a wider induction; and the Scripture remains a higher rule than even these generally consenting testimonies of Christians. The Church has a practical basis for worship and witness bearing, and all her other work, in the ascertained harmonies of experience; and yet this urges her to continued advance through the study of Scripture. When Kant, in 1781, published his *Critique of Pure Reason*, he dedicated it to Baron von Zedlitz, the minister of Public Instruction in Prussia. The Baron wrote him,

Ascertained harmonies of experience furnish a practical basis for worship and work.

> "I have not been able to understand all that is in your book, and feel that I need some instruction from yourself. I am like a student who sits too far from the desk, and my *Heft* (Note-book) needs to be corrected."

So, too, Churches and Christians make a bad *Heft* by sitting too far from the desk; for when their experience is too little based on one original, it admits too little of mutual recognition. As they come back to the Word of God, the Spirit of Christ, who copies it variously in them all, makes their unities increase, and through these all the offices and functions of the one great body, with the sense of "this effectual working in the measure of every part," necessarily go forward to the edifying of the whole in love.

(3) *The* third *and last use claimed here for Christian experience is to afford a starting point for impression on the world.* Though in the deepest

Christian experience affords a starting point for impression on the world.

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sense an argument for Christians, it has also a side for unbelievers. It is often said that the experience of Christians is incommunicable to them; and this in their present state is so far true. But is it not the fact that the very greatness of Christian experience also moves them? Are they not capable of discerning and so far appreciating the revolution wrought in the character of those who were once their own associates? Strauss represents the impression, made on the Apostle Paul by what he saw in the Christian assemblies which he invaded, as so deep, that it paved the way for his belief in the Resurrection. Thus it is still, and while the greatness of the change strikes, so also does the unity of the product, as expressed in every form of Christian testimony, not only in public worship and confession, but in the most private records of Christian biography, such as letters and diaries, and even the appeals of friendship, in which many a Christian pleads with others to follow in the track of his own decision. The world of the undecided is filled with these haunting memories and thoughts, where perhaps it may be least expected, and many an opponent, and even a persecutor, may be agitating the question which Strauss puts into the mouth of the yet unconverted Saul, "Who is after all on the right side, thou or the crucified Galilean, of whom these enthusiasts speak?" Thus, through the workings of conscience, and

Strauss's view of the impression made on St. Paul by what he saw in the Christian assemblies.

Lingering memories of impressions received from Christian testimony.

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these strivings of a higher Power, the experiences of Christians struggle to communicate themselves. The communication is begun, and would be carried farther, were it not thwarted and repressed through the fault of those who resist its working. Is there not here then a hint and an encouragement to all Christians to proceed in their great work of converting the world to Christ, not only in the memories of what they have experienced themselves through that grace to which nothing is impossible, but in the anticipation of finding amidst deep and lamentable indifference an unsuspected tremor of susceptibility? May they not also be instructed how to meet this hidden want and craving? For all experience shows that when the soul is truly awakened, its saddest burden is not of man's sin against his neighbour (though this also has a large share), but of ingratitude and trespass against his God and Saviour. To this need, then, the redemption of Christ must be first held forth, and the remedy of reconciliation and regeneration, pointed to in the treasure of Christian experience, must be most earnestly applied. For Christianity is not a sociology but a soteriology; and it is a soteriology, *i.e.*, a science of salvation, only as it is a Theology and a Christology. It is as it brings into the world the mighty shadow of God and the saving image of Jesus Christ, that it heralds peace on earth and good-will to-

Christian experience struggles to communicate itself.

The burden of the awakened soul.

Christianity a science of salvation.

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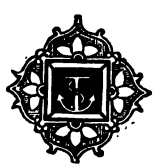
wards men. Then, however needful in all ages, and in none more than our own, the display of its power to heal all the social wrongs and woes of men, it comes most effectually as a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins; and with its transcendent light from the Cross that brightens eternity, it touches at every point the horizon of time, and makes all things new.

It comes as a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.



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THE SUCCESS OF CHRISTIANITY AND MODERN EXPLANATIONS OF IT.

BY

THE REV. PRINCIPAL CAIRNS, D.D.,

AUTHOR OF "UNBELIEF IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY"
(*Being the Cunningham Lecture for* 1880).

THE RELIGIOUS TRACT SOCIETY:
56, PATERNOSTER ROW; 65, ST. PAUL'S CHURCHYARD; AND
164, PICCADILLY.

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Analysis of the Argument.

DIVINE intervention in the history of Christianity is inferred from the extent, completeness, nature, and means of its success in the old Roman world; from the wonderful moral and spiritual change which it wrought in the characters and lives of the early converts; from its missionary and mental activity even during the "Dark Ages;" from the power it displayed of renewing its youth at the time of the Reformation, and subsequently of entering into and becoming the creator of the modern world; from the manner in which it has been able to resist and overcome persecution, and draw inspiration from its martyr history; from the success with which it has repelled the assaults of unbelief and the powers of darkness, and subdued the native resistance of the human heart; from its organization, ordinances, and literature which fit it in a unique manner for the work it has to do; and from the motives with which it is furnished for the fulfilment of its mission; and, lastly, from the manner in which its own predictions, both of its successes and corruptions, have been fulfilled.

The insufficiency of modern explanations of its early success is shown; a mere general capacity for change in human nature without some adequate motive cannot account for it. Christ cannot be brought into connexion with Jewish Platonism; nor is there anything in Platonism or Alexandrian philosophy to account for Christianity: the theory is refuted by the facts of early Church history. The support of rulers was fitted then rather to retard than help the spread of Christianity. It was impotent to restore Paganism or give victory to Arianism. The prevalence of hopes of a peculiarly earthly millennium is denied by many Christian writers, and is in itself quite inadequate to account for the conversion of Pagans at the expense of unspeakable present social loss and ruin. Priestcraft has been injurious to Christianity, and there was nothing in early Christianity on which it could feed.

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THE SUCCESS OF CHRISTIANITY

AND

MODERN EXPLANATIONS OF IT.

THE attempt to found an argument for the Divine origin of Christianity on its success encounters some difficulties. We may frankly grant that it cannot rank among the first arguments; for a religion must first succeed by other and even deeper reasons in its favour before success can be pleaded on its behalf. We may grant also that this argument needs to be very carefully guarded; for a religion may prevail to some extent by a combination of causes, which involve nothing more than an appeal to the ordinary principles of human nature, including some of no very elevated character, such as superstition, fanaticism, or immorality. Other religions, in point of fact, seem to have flourished, and long maintained a place, such as classical Paganism, Buddhism, and Mohammedanism, without being on that account

Difficulties of the argument.

It needs to be carefully guarded.

Other religions.

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accepted by Christians; and hence the burden of making out a special case for themselves appears to rest on Christians, when they come forward with this argument.

A special case must be made out for Christianity.

Still, Christianity is not silenced or put out of court by these preliminary points of difficulty. As elsewhere it claims to stand alone and unexampled, so here; and it has therefore to be fairly considered whether a singularity amounting to miracle really gathers around its history, such as no mere worldly ambition, or superstitious excitement, or fanatical credulity can reasonably explain. It is a case not for *a priori* dogmatism in the way of accepting or rejecting the alleged evidence, but for calm and accurate estimate of facts, and of their relation to mere human possibilities of explanation; and hence this Tract will endeavour to pursue this method of proof, setting forth in the history of Christianity what looks so exceptionally successful as to suggest Divine intervention, and then glancing at the abatements which recent doubt has advanced in attempting to reduce the whole to a mere earthly origin. This is the natural order for a Christian to follow. The undoubted facts which sustain his conclusion must first speak; the counter-theories must then be lawfully silenced.

Its history unique.

The method of the tract.

I. The argument which meets us *first* in surveying the history of Christianity, and in

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estimating the outstanding and singular features of its success, is *its early, wide, and, within certain limits, absolutely irresistible diffusion.* Other facts attest this; but I select one as to which there can be no controversy, the extirpation by it of idolatry such as it existed in the old Roman world. That system, from the Euphrates to the farthest shore of Britain, from the Nile to the forests of Germany, has utterly passed away. The whole regions around the Mediterranean, to the limits of civilization and beyond them, have "changed their gods;" and though something, as time advanced, may be claimed for Mohammedanism, the great, decisive, all-prevailing impulses have come from Christianity. The classic Paganism, Greek and Roman, the Syrian, the Egyptian, and North African, the Druidic, and ultimately the Teutonic, have all fallen to rise no more; and at this moment there is not on the face of the earth a single worshipper of "the great goddess Diana" or "the image that fell down from Jupiter," of Baal or Dagon, of Isis or Serapis, of Thor or Wodin. They are preserved in imperishable literature, and in equally imperishable art. Homer and the great tragedians have enshrined them; Virgil and Ovid; even Milton in his Paradise Lost and Christmas Hymn, to say nothing of that wonderful Book, which, in revealing their abominations, will be found to have carried farthest and widest their memory. But not

First argument.

The old Pagan idolatry utterly abolished.

The old gods enshrined only in literature and art.

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Not a shrine to the old gods exists.

a single shrine remains to them in the proper sense of the word, not even where the Apollo or Venus, the Minerva or Hercules, enchains universal admiration. They are abolished as idols, while immortalized as relics; and not even the exquisite beauty lavished upon them can hide the moral deformity to which they owe their downfall. It is long centuries since one single soul regarded them with anything of the feeling with which the African trembles before the rudest fetish, or the Hindoo before the most unsightly of his divinities. Another conquest so complete and absolute does not mark the history of the world. All ranks and classes passed through the revolution. The husbandman had to give up his offerings to Liber and Ceres, the sailor his votive tablets to Neptune, the soldier his chaplets dedicated to Mars. The youth had to forget his place in the procession, the virgin her part in the dance or secular games. The senator had to forego his libation on entering the senate; the general his search after the omens before battle; the very emperor, the honour of his own coins and titles of divinity. What but an immense and boundless power could have wrought this change, and wrought it not by constraint but willingly, through the force of persuasion? It cannot be denied that some of the later conflicts with paganism were unfair, and that Christianity denied to idolatry the civil justice which it had so

The completion of the conquest.

An immense power needful to work the change.

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nobly and passionately claimed for itself by act and suffering. But in the decisive stages of the contest nothing prevailed, or could have prevailed, but moral influence; and the preacher, the apologist, the martyr, secured a pure and bloodless victory.

The prevailing power moral influence.

The difficulty of this gigantic task has been underrated by Gibbon, with his characteristic skill in finding some shadow of foundation for his assertions, and then exaggerating them beyond reason. The shadow of truth is the weariness of unsatisfied longing which idolatry had diffused. But this did not lead men to quit it, even nominally, any more than the weariness of men in the service of sin begets a universal repentance. The force of habit —even the returning fear of superstition—to say nothing of the dread of state convulsion and the bias of manifold selfish interest, upheld the great fabric long against all assaults; and even philosophy did its best, by surrendering so much of paganism, and trying to improve the rest, to avert the impending destruction. Idolatry died so hard that we find the emperor Julian, in the fourth century, still needing to be refuted by the very arguments, at the hands of Cyril of Alexandria, that had done service in the days of Clement and Origen; nor could Augustine, in the full blaze of Christian triumph, overlook the prejudice which traced the capture of Rome by the Goths to the anger of its

Gibbon's exaggerations.

Causes hindering the downfal of idolatry.

Its hard death.

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Christianity completed its work slowly and alone.

neglected deities. But though Christianity had to complete its work slowly, it did it, and did it alone; and thus there was ended a revolution greater than if the idolatries of India, China, and Japan—such as we know them in our days—were one and all to fall; for these are not the leading nations of the world, nor will their thought affect all time; whereas paganism then died in the very centre of the world's life and greatness, and the thought from the midst of which, as by a mighty hand, it was torn out—has lived on to affect all literature, and even the Christianity that overmastered it, to the end of the world. It is true that the victory of Christianity was not perfect, and that paganism shrunk back into a subtler and more spiritual form, waiting its opportunity again to rush forth amidst congenial darkness, and in the very name of Christ to enslave mankind. But the deliverance, though not final, was yet unspeakably great and blessed; and the unreason, the blight, the continued burden and shadow with which polytheism in its gross and open prevalence afflicts the nations for ever passed away.

Its victory.

Polytheism for ever gone.

The inward transformation it has effected.

II. The *second* argument in which the success of Christianity may be summed up is *the inward and radical transformation* which it has effected. Its extensive force has been the product of an intensive earnestness peculiar to itself; and this

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perhaps shines out most in its first appearance upon the scene. When its enemies, even the most intelligent and candid, were blindly opposing it as an "execrable superstition," it was effecting a moral miracle on the "hidden man of the heart," and then on all human life and character, without parallel. This is sufficiently attested in the New Testament, where the novel precept stands confirmed by equally exalted practice. But perhaps the impression may be continued (it cannot be heightened) by some extracts from immediately succeeding literature, which show how startling was the change which Christianity had wrought. From many examples the following may be selected:—

The moral miracle unparalleled.

Examples.

One of the most interesting features in the Apologies of Justin Martyr—presented to Roman emperors in defence of the new religion—is the light cast on the moral state of the Christian Church. In the First Apology, addressed to Antoninus Pius and his sons, about the year 139, Justin, whose own conversion as a Palestinian Greek, from philosophy to faith in Christ, is one of the brightest passages in early Christian history, dwells much upon the spread of the Gospel, which had just ended its first century; but he also gives prominence to its moral and spiritual effects. "After we were persuaded by the Word, we forsook the powers of evil, and now follow the one everlasting God by His own Son. We who

Justin Martyr's conversion and testimony.

The effects produced by Christianity.

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Moral and spiritual effects of Christianity.

delighted before in fornication, now embrace only chastity. We who practised magic rites, have now devoted ourselves to the good and everlasting God. We who loved above everything the income we drew from stocks, and houses, and lands, now cast what we have into the common treasury, and give to every one that needeth. We who hated and slew each other in mutual feuds, and through diversity of customs would not even warm ourselves at the same fire with strangers, now, after the advent of Christ, sit at the same table; and we pray for our enemies, and strive to convert those who unjustly hate us, that they too living according to the glorious precepts of Christ, may have the same good hope of reward from the Lord of all."[1]

Justin Martyr's testimony continued.

Again, with reference to the word, "Let your light so shine," etc., Justin says: "We ought not to resist, for He has wished us not to be imitators of the wicked, but has exhorted us by patience and meekness to lead all away from the shame and lustful desire of evil things. And this we can point to in the case of many who have been among you; for they have been transformed from harshness and violence of character by seeing the self-command of their Christian neighbours, or having evidence of their patience under frauds, or other dealings in business;" and he adds, "Let

[1] *First Apology*, chap. xiv.

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those who do not live as Christ enjoined, be known not to be Christians, whatever they may profess; and such who merely take the name of Christ, but live inconsistently with it, we give up to you to punish them as you please."[1]

The Epistle to Diognetus

Similar to this is the testimony of another ancient writing, which has been ascribed to Justin —though with little probability, and which has had a remarkable fate, having come down to us in a single corroded manuscript, without being referred to by so much as one author of early times. This is the Epistle to Diognetus, which general consent places in the second century, and possibly nearer the beginning than the end of it. The picture of the Christian life is here as vivid as if it had been taken yesterday: "Every foreign country is to them a home, and their home to them is foreign; like all, they marry and beget children, but they expose them not when born, . . . they are in the flesh, but they live not after the flesh. They abide on earth, but their citizenship is in heaven. They obey the established laws, but in their lives far excel them. They love all, and by all they are persecuted. They are unexamined, yet condemned; they are killed, yet made alive. They are poor, yet make many rich; in want of all things, in all they abound. They are dishonoured, and in their dishonour glorified. They are blasphemed, and

Its picture of the Christian life.

[1] *First Apology*, chap. xvi.

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Picture of the Christian life continued.

yet justified. They are reviled, and they bless; insulted, and they honour. Doing good, they are punished as malefactors; and when punished, they rejoice as quickened. War is raised against them as aliens from the Jews; unrighteous suffering befals them from the Greeks; and the cause of this enmity no hater of them can tell."[1]

Such is the change of character which this epistle ascribes to the Christian. Now see how in this early document the creed which wrought it is equally distinctive. "In whom was it possible for us to be justified—all sinful and ungodly as we were—save in the only Son of God? O, the sweet exchange, the unsearchable depth of counsel, the unlooked-for fulness of grace, that in the One righteous the sin of many should be covered, and the righteousness of One make many sinners just!"[2]

The creed of this epistle.

If now we turn from the Greek-speaking Church to the Latin, we find the evidence of the same wonderful change. Tertullian shall speak for it as to the Christian in life, and Cyprian in death. The one writes as an apologist of Christianity in North Africa, in the end of the second century; the other, as a bishop there, soon to be a martyr, about half a century later. Thus Tertullian pleads with more than his usual rugged beauty: "We are not Brahmins or gymnosophists, dwellers in

Tertullian and Cyprian.

The Christian life according to Tertullian.

[1] *Epistle to Diognetus*, chap. v. [2] *Epistle to Diognetus*, chap. ix.

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woods and exiles from life. We remember what we owe to God our Creator. We reject no fruit of His works. We use without abusing, that we may not use amiss. Therefore, not without forum and market-place, not without your baths, shops, factories, inns, fairs, and other means of commerce do we live in this world. We sail with you, and go out to war, and work in the country, and make bargains; we fully mingle our skill with yours, and lay open our labours for your service. How we should be useless to those with whom and by whom we live, I cannot understand. If I frequent not your religious ceremonies, yet on every holiday I am still a man. . . . I buy not a sacred chaplet for my head; but if I pay for flowers, why should I not let them hang loose as nature made them; or is a wreath itself worse applied to the nostril than to the hair? We are not found in theatres; but if we want anything there sold, we can get it better in its own place. We are charged with buying no incense; but if Arabia complains, let the Sabeans know that more spices are buried with the Christian dead than burned to the gods. But, you tell us, we waste the temple revenues, as hardly any one now casts a mite thither. Well, we cannot help both needy men and your pauper gods too, or give to any but those who can ask us. Let Jupiter hold out his hand, and we will fill it; not to

Tertullian on the Christian life.

Christian practices.

Charges against Christians refuted.

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Defence of Christians from false charges.

mention that our charity spends more in the street than your religion with all the help of your temples. Other public funds are more grateful to the Christians, who pay their state dues with the same loyalty with which they abstain from defrauding their neighbours; and thus if one should calculate how much the nation loses by your dishonesty, it would be the measure of the compensation which we supply. . . . Many are the heads under which your criminals are enrolled, which of them is also a Christian? No one, save where this is his only offence; or if anything besides, he has lost the Christian name."[1]

Cyprian on the Christian in death.

Of the Christian character as raised above the fear of death, Cyprian thus grandly speaks, amidst the ravages of a pestilence in Carthage. In this closing part of his sermon here extracted we may note already some outlines of the *Te Deum:*

"Paradise we have begun to count our home, the patriarchs our fathers. Why do we not haste and run to see our country, and to salute our parents? There the mighty host of our dear ones awaits us, the ample crowd of fathers, brothers, sons, desire us, certain of their own bliss and now only concerned for ours. What shall our common joy be, theirs and ours, to come to each others' sight and embrace? What delight in these celestial realms without fear of dying, and in the

[1] *Apologeticus*, chap. xlii–xliv.

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eternity of living what supreme and perpetual felicity! There is the glorious chorus of the apostles, there the fellowship of exulting prophets, there the innumerable army of martyrs crowned for their victory in the strife and suffering; there the rejoicing virgins, who have quelled the lust of the flesh by the strength of purity; the merciful rewarded, who did works of righteousness by their gifts and bounties to the poor, and who at Christ's word have turned the inheritance of earth into the treasures of heaven! To them, my beloved brethren, let us haste with eager desire, and long to be soon with them, that we may find ourselves soon with Christ. Such an aspiration may God behold in us, such a purpose of heart and faith may Christ our Lord discern in us, who shall give us all the brighter rewards of His glory, the more our desires have been set on their possession." [1]

The joys and society of paradise.

It will be remembered that the moral and spiritual elevation described in these extracts is not claimed merely by Christians, but admitted by Gibbon, who ranks as his fourth secondary cause of the success of Christianity, "the pure and austere morals of the Christians." [2] The same argument —not as Gibbon puts it for a mere natural success, but for a Divine intervention to produce first the new piety and morality in which the success mainly

Gibbon's admission concerning Christian character.

Christian morality supernatural in origin.

[1] Cyprian *De Mortalitate*, chap. xxvi.

[2] *Decline and Fall*, chap. xv.

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The argument for Divine intervention always valid when the same features are seen.

consisted, and then whatever outward influence flowed from it,—is valid wherever Christianity has in succeeding ages presented the same unworldly features. Attention has been concentrated on this moral and spiritual transformation: because perhaps it is brightest at its origin, and also because the argument, though cumulative, is essentially the same in all the periods of the living history of the Church of Christ.

The power of revival belonging to Christianity.

III. The *third* feature of the success of Christianity, which also belongs to it alone, lies in *its power of revival and restoration after every declension and decay.* Nothing like this has been seen at all in Mohammedanism. It has admitted of support by new blood as a temporal kingdom; but not as a great spiritual institution. After the decay of its Saracenic form,—when but for the incursions into the West, first of the Seljukian and then of the Ottoman Turks, it would have died of exhaustion within a few centuries of its birth,—it has not revived with any commanding moral force or productive energy; and its literary chronicle—scanty enough at the best—has been enlarged by no great accessions. With Christianity it is entirely different: no part of its history is more wonderful than its power to "renew its youth." The deeper exploration of the Middle Ages, the study of the beginnings of national literature in a Christian

Mohammedanism destitute of this power.

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form, even the manifested continuity of the western sacred language, and whatever still redeemed the barrenness of the Byzantine Greek, reveal the fertility of Christianity under the most adverse influences of superstition and barbarism; while the continued conversions of northern races, and the active thought of schoolmen all through, rising to the grandeur of spiritual life in an Anselm and a Bernard, show with what limitation the darkness of these transition ages is to be understood. Ere long, anticipating even the renascence of classic literature, Christianity becomes the guide and the awakener of modern Europe; and in the struggles of Wycliffe, Huss, and other Reformers before the Reformation, renews the flame that had never wholly expired. It has been finely said by Isaac Taylor, that amid the immense expansion of the human mind in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, when so much was new—not only an outbursting modern literature, but a discovered ancient—and even a literal new world unveiled, it might have been expected that Christianity, if effete, would have been exploded and left for ever behind. The opposite issue certainly was one of the strongest tributes to the vitality of the Gospel ever given. But we may go farther, and say that Christianity not only was capable of entering into the new and modern world, but was more its creator than any other force. The mere literary impulse—strong

The fertility of Christianity.

Conversions of northern races.

The schoolmen.

The renascence of classic literature.

Isaac Taylor on the human mind in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

Christianity the creator of the modern world.

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as it was—would have degenerated into paganism and materialism. The mighty forces of nationality, in which modern liberty was to find its expression, would have broken up the mediæval despotism in Church and State without any principle of faith and reverence to take its place. Philosophy in any of its classical shapes, or in the new departures associated with the names of Bacon and Descartes, could never have satisfied the deepest longings of the heart, or done the work of religion. It was the glory of Christianity, that in this most critical and testing period, it could play the central part in human affairs, and so adapt itself to one of the world's great epochs as to avert the worst dangers, and bring back blessings that through its corruption had been almost lost. For this end a Reformation was indispensable, and through leaders cast in a gigantic mould by the Spirit of God it came. There started up in many lands, as at one loud summons, men to whom Christianity had become a new revelation and a fresh life—a true gospel of eternal redemption centred in a crucified and living Saviour, who returned as at a bound to the theology of Paul, and who even completed that of Augustine, carrying his doctrine of grace into justification as well as sanctification, and by the realized blessedness of faith and universal priesthood of believers, extricating the Christian society at once from caste and despotism, and ending the

The forces of nationality could only have destroyed mediæval despotism.

Philosophy could not have done the work of religion.

Christianity alone could play the central part in human affairs.

A reformation indispensable.

The Reformers and their teachings.

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long reign of formalism and oppression under which it had groaned.

The natural and spiritual qualifications of the Reformers.

Equal in the highest examples to the greatest humanists in learning, to the best thinkers in philosophy, and to the ablest statesmen in those gifts of administration which raised them to be the counsellors of princes and commonwealths, they added that Divine experience and inward light which made their work a mission of salvation, and not a human dictatorship, and fitted them to be the evangelists and teachers of the poor, the neglected, and misguided, whose souls were everywhere groping in the shadow of death. Thus the movement which they headed, and in relation to which they had to do in some sort the work of the prophet as well as of the apostle, was not a mere protest against tyranny, or a transfer to a new centre of ecclesiastical power, but a great spiritual awakening, running in new and popular channels of speech and song and rite, no longer magical but rational, yet essentially grounded on faith, and due to that mighty Book which they brought forth from its hiding-place, and gave to the people; and in which, unsealing a literature which had nothing to fear from contrast with Homer or Plato, not to speak of outgrowths on its own soil like Dante or Shakespeare, and which transcended their own best creations as far as they did the scholasticism which they supplanted, they found anew the impelling and

The nature of the movement which they headed.

The impulse and force due to the Bible.

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regulative force of that revived Church which they restored, and which henceforth, thus governed itself, was to govern the history of the world.

The Reformation connected with everything great since it took place.

It is certain that whatever has since been great in the history of mankind, has more or less directly connected itself with the Reformation. The nations that rejected it have fallen utterly behind, and are only slowly and with difficulty recovering some mutilated part of its inheritance. It has made Britain: it is also making America. It has given to France, with all the penalties of revolution, the only imitation of itself which that people will accept. It has given to Protestant Germany—fallen alas from a higher strain—material pre-eminence in Europe. Wherever there is a Bible, a Sabbath, a regulated liberty, a national education, a pure and manly literature, the Reformation is its fountain-head; and there the names of its great heroes are still as household words, and lead the van of human progress. In its past results it has repelled the calumny that it preached a barren faith, as in its perpetual alliance with a learned criticism and speculation, it has refuted the charge of hard and stereotyped tradition. It has been the mother of successive revivals, as in the great Methodist one of last century—numbering now its converts by millions, and influencing for good the whole English-speaking world. It has recalled the mission spirit and work of apostolic times,—slowly

What it has done for Britain, America, France, and Germany.

It has been the mother of successive revivals.

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indeed, and by an unfortunate interval, but which will not be too sternly judged by those who remember its own difficulties, and the tremendous odds against which it has had to save itself from extermination. Its work in the old world and in the new, and in the newest, where the best fruits of religion and liberty are also its children, is far from exhausted; and if ever a time come which seems to be distant, that shall as far transcend it as it has transcended the mediæval and patristic Christianity which has paled before it, that will at once bring to it a more just and reverent appreciation, and will exalt the greatness of that Divine religion, which draws out of its exhaustless treasures things new and old, and spreads the fulness of its immeasurable riches over all the progressive cycles of human history. We live in a period when the Reformation suffers alike from Traditionalist reaction, and Rationalist licence, which have equally maligned its name and obscured its works. But these are only eddies in the great current which the Reformation, however intermittently, is still pouring out upon the nations; and those who look for its decay and disappearance may as soon expect the drying up of the Nile, or of the mighty streams that from distant Alpine sources, which the Reformation itself recalls, water half the lands of Europe.

Its work not exhausted.

Present reaction and licence only eddies in the current.

In connection with the perpetual revival of Christianity, it is impossible not to notice the

The perpetual revival of Christianity.

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The rise of bright and select names irrespective of outward divisions.

rising up from age to age of bright and select names which seem to restore all that is most distinctive of Christian character. This is independent of the outward divisions of Christianity; for to all genius and piety have been allied, as in Francis Xavier, Blaise Pascal, Archbishop Fenelon, in John Arndt, Paul Gerhardt, Spener, Zinzendorf; in Samuel Rutherford, Richard Baxter, John Bunyan; in our English cloud of hymn-writers, George Herbert, Bishop Ken, Isaac Watts, Charles Wesley, John Newton, William Cowper; while in the great lights that have risen and still rise in the missionary firmament—Carey, Martyn, Heber, Judson, Duff, Livingstone—Christianity looks as little as possible like an exhausted religion. Female greatness, even in a heroic type, has in our own century, as always in the past, attested its power, as in Mrs. Fry, in Mrs. Judson, in Amalie Siveking, in Florence Nightingale.

Hymn-writers.

Missionaries

The power of resistance to assaults displayed by Christianity.

IV. A *fourth* argument necessary to be taken note of is, *the resistance which Christianity has been able to offer to successive assaults.* Of course, it is not peculiar to Christianity as a religion, or as itself an aggressive and disturbing force, to be assailed. It has here but shared the common lot; but it stands alone in having been so passionately, variously, persistently assailed, and yet in having turned each onset into an argument for its Divine strength. It

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was at first but little likely that this obscure provincial growth would ever test the energies of the Roman empire. Our Lord's word might even have seemed to claim too much in expecting that it would be brought in any way before rulers and magistrates. But it lived to weaken by its endurance the mighty power that struggled to crush it; and not without reason, Gibbon ranks it among the causes of the decline and fall of Rome. We cannot indeed sum up so exactly as the old chroniclers a tale of ten persecutions, or authenticate all the data of martyrology. But we have enough in the brief notices of Tacitus as to the Neronian persecution, — in the invaluable circular of the Church of Lyons as to the outbreak there even under a Marcus Aurelius,—in the letters of Cyprian to the confessors of North Africa,—and in the sketches of Eusebius as to the sufferings, which he saw and so far shared, of the martyrs of Palestine, in the last and worst conflict of all,—to make it perfectly certain that the Roman empire could not have done more to extirpate the new faith, and that its final triumph, all the more after the pause under Julian, was a political necessity. And if at that time, when the empire was divided against itself, we are almost awed by the courage and endurance of the Christian witnesses, what must it have been at the first, when on the wide surface of the Roman earth there seemed neither sympathy

Its obscure origin

Its endurance and power.

The efforts to extirpate the new faith.

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The earliest martyrs.

nor help, and every land that could have opened a refuge was controlled by that one great despotism? Luther at Worms, backed by great princes, and with a rising current of national feeling on his side, does not look half so forlorn as Paul before Nero, or (if the story be accepted) Ignatius before Trajan. When Christianity itself comes into power, and in its worst period and form of corruption takes up and wields the darkest resources of pagan tyranny, inventing new tortures, and making the Inquisition a more regular and organized force of repression, the living Christianity that had fled from such companionship, and was disowned and hunted to death, did more to redeem and vindicate the honours of the Christian name, than its pursuers to sully and discredit it. The long roll of Protestant martyrs, and even of earlier martyrs like these in Albigensian and Waldensian days, gathered at length out of almost every land in Europe, and not without traces in America—has equalled, if not exceeded every other, and brought home anew with touching power the sacred words, "They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword, they wandered about in sheep skins and goat skins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented, (of whom the world was not worthy,) they wandered in deserts and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth."

Corrupted and persecuting Christianity.

Protestant martyrs.

Most of the living Christianity in the world

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draws its roots from these sad and dark scenes of resistance unto blood for Christian truth and liberty; and the faith and patience of these saints of other days still glows in many a memorial and work of their children. They justly ask if all this was done and suffered without heavenly strength; and while a milder spirit of charity has softened much of the bitterness of these recollections as bequeathed from an earlier age, they are not willing to renounce the conviction that God by nerving their forefathers with so much of the martyr spirit, thus decided between them and their persecutors, and calls on them still "to hold fast that they have, that no man take their crown."

The present influence of the ancient martyrs.

The power of God nerved the martyrs.

The argument of Divine help and succour in handing down what is most unworldly and characteristic in the Christian faith, is, without presumption, applicable also in dealing with unbelievers, who may be challenged to produce any similar confirmation given by suffering on a large scale—not only to unbelief, but even to natural religion; for while it may be true that every religion has had its martyrs, no martyrology but that associated with the Bible records, exalts whole masses and even nations; nor have the martyrs of doubt and negation been conspicuous either by their numbers or by their fortitude.

Unbelievers challenged to produce similar testimony to unbelief.

Among the other assaults also which Christianity has had to endure and to surmount, is that from

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Controversy.

unbelief itself, not often happily by force, but by the weapons of argument and criticism. Of these Christianity would be the last to complain; and on the contrary it registers their failure as a fresh evidence of Divine help and protection. Nor can it be reasonably affirmed that Christianity up to this day has been worsted on this field of battle. The Christian defenders, from Grotius downwards, have at least given as good as they received. The deists of England have left a century and a half of vigorous Christian life behind them, and have fallen themselves into dust and shade. Voltaire is disowned by Renan; Strauss clears out Paulus, to deepen his own foundation. The German rationalist has to turn his face somewhat reluctantly to materialism, and hail the socialist as a brother. The atheist is certain that from his point of view all religion has fallen; the non-Christian theist gathers his own out of the wreck; while the pantheist, from the indifference-point between, reconciles both by a religion which makes affirmation and negation the different sides of each other. Amidst the general confusion hardly any one seems to prosper but the agnostic; but he in his confidence oversets himself, and the victory of his ignorance is its discomfiture. It can hardly be said that these discordant hosts have as yet driven Christianity to its tents, or divided the spoils of its camp among them. The serious word of Butler is as well-

Christian apologists.

The confusion among the opponents of Christianity.

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grounded as it was more than a hundred years ago: "Whereas some imagine the supposed doubtfulness of the evidence for revelation implies a positive argument that it is not true, it appears on the contrary to imply a positive argument that it is true. For could any common relation of such antiquity, extent, and variety (for in these things the stress of what I am now observing lies), be proposed to the examination of the world; that it could not in an age of knowledge and liberty be confuted, or shown to have nothing in it, to the satisfaction of reasonable men, this would be thought a strong presumptive proof of its truth."

Bishop Butler on the alleged doubtfulness of the evidence of revelation.

Analogy, Part II. chap. vii.

Christianity has given good and valid replies to the special objections urged in a period of English history and literature which shows as yet no traces of decline. But the best answer has been simply to live on and do the work of the Christian Church at home and abroad, as if unbelief had never lifted its head; and this Christianity has confessedly done to a degree which neither Butler nor all the assailants, whose points he received on his one shield, could by any stretch of fancy have anticipated.

The best answer to objections.

Nor is it to be lost sight of that there are deeper objections to Christianity than those which unbelief—formally so called—has to avow. There is in every human heart a force of native resistance stronger than anything urged by Celsus or Porphyry, by Collins or Tindal. The pride and self-right-

The deepest objections to Christianity.

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The native resistance of the human heart to Christianity.

eousness, the lust and worldliness of human nature have to be conquered, even where the intellect and the conscience may be so far subdued. The continued creation of humble, grateful, pure and spiritually-minded Christians is the greatest measure of the force of Christianity as an overcoming power, and this witness of the Spirit, which is essentially the work of the Spirit, all apologists place deeper than anything else. Nor is it to be overlooked that Christians who feel truly the adverse influences that contend against them, include also the hostility of evil spiritual powers. This indeed cannot be made evident to the world, but may rather provoke its ridicule. Still it is of weight, as showing to others the impression on the Christian mind of the various and formidable strength which needs to be subdued, and which works against Christianity in more fallen races than one. That Christianity, in the estimate of those who know it best and see farthest into its range, is equal to the conflict with all these "rulers of darkness," is an argument at least of the courage and hopefulness with which, from age to age, it inspires all its followers, and rallies them after every apparent repulse, so that they are "able to stand in the evil day, and having done all to stand."

The new creative power of Christianity.

Evil spiritual powers.

Christianity equal to and triumphant in the conflict.

Fifth branch of the argument.

V. A *fifth* branch of the argument from the success of Christianity is the way in which *it is*

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specially armed with means and motives for self-propagation. Some religions, like most of the ancient pagan and the modern Hindoo, have never been proselyting; others, like the Jewish, have lost the proselyting impulse. Only the Buddhist and the Mohammedan have so far, on this side, resembled Christianity. But Christianity has, and turns to account, facilities for propagation, such as no other religion has ever displayed. There is behind all a solid and definite organization. Christianity is not merely an impulse, a sentiment, or even a school of thought. It is formed into an institution, a church, with definite doctrines, sacraments, worship, discipline, and government. In regard to these there have been and are diversities; but though the full advantage of unity has thus been lost, the idea of organization in different shapes has remained; and perhaps the life connected with freedom and variety has been some compensation for the loss of cohesion thus entailed. Christianity has thus had a visibility in the world, beyond what could ever belong to a sect of philosophy, or a mere self-sprung association; for it has traced its order to its Head and Founder, and maintained its outward existence as a confession of His name and a homage to His authority. Christianity has thus had a visibility eminently favourable to its diffusion. Its converts could at once find a home; it could itself, and the world

Special means and motives for self-propagation.

The Church

The idea of organization survives all divisions.

Order in the Church traceable to Christ, and is a confession of His name.

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Advantages of Church order.

with it, see and be moved by its own progress. Its great ordinances of preaching and other worship, its initiations and commemorations, its observance of the Lord's day, its ministries and acts of government, have given it, though not a kingdom of this world, a visible place, wider, deeper, more secure than that of any earthly kingdom. For, visibility

Stability.

has been associated with stability, even amidst succession and change in civil and national history, and by the presence of the same Word of God—with creeds and interpretations founded upon it,—the fixity of tradition has, at least in the best instances, guided, without impairing, the capacity of progress. For Christianity to have thus laid a hold upon the past—all the more that it was no blind or fruitless veneration—has been immensely

Christianity and education.

helpful in conquering the future. And here every one must acknowledge the enormous superiority of Christianity in dealing with the young, and in allying itself everywhere with the cause of education, so that, what is well-nigh a blank in other religions, what does not seem a possibility in connection with any so-called outgrowth of religious reason that is to supplant Christianity, has long been realized in the Christian home, and more re-

The family and Sunday-school.

cently in the Sabbath-school, where truths, the most touching, the most consoling, the most pure and elevating, are in the most attractive form brought near the youthful heart. From the place

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of advantage which it has once gained as a permanent and organized society, Christianity is also fitted to act on those without—even to the greatest distances—as no other religion can do. Its very ordinances—observed for the sake of its converts, and for what is called in Christian language, *edification*—have the strongest tendency, through the power of speech, the solemnity of prayer and sacrament, and not least, the charm of sacred song, to move and win others; so that in the very nature of things, and to a degree far beyond anything in Judaism, Christianity, by its very presence in the world, is an appeal to all to enter by its ever open gate—a gate of which the entry to the Gentile proselyte was a very imperfect figure.

The influence of Christianity on the world.

The influence of Judaism not to be compared with it

And now that the religion of redemption is complete, and divested of every local and national rite or usage that fettered its universality, there is not only the impulsion, but the positive obligation to carry it outward into "the regions beyond," and to preach it as a Gospel of divine and all-embracing love to every creature. With the visibility of a column, with the stability of an inscription, there is thus given the transmissibility of a message, overleaping every barrier of race and clime, printed off or sent with electric speed to the ends of the earth. The wonderful adaptation of the Bible to march at the head of this evangelism, to be the inspiration of all its oral teaching, the

The obligation to evangelize the world.

The adaptation of the Bible to the work to be done.

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foundation of all its literature, the text-book of its new philosophy, and the code of its highest laws and ordinances, can only be expressed in utterances of its own. "Its line is gone out into all the earth, and its words to the end of the world." The whole of Christianity moulded by one Book, knit together by one sympathy, embraced in one harmony of song, which binds up the dissonances of earth and foreshadows the communion of heaven, is a phenomenon unparalleled in literature and in religious experience; and the longer that Christianity lasts, gathering up the traditions of ages, and the farther it goes into outlying and desolate regions, encircling them with its light and fruitfulness, the grander is the testimony to its world-wide mission and destiny. Not only do the Christian Scriptures reach through all time, and scatter their seed over the whole field of the world, but there are other great books laden with their influence that diffuse and multiply the blessing, giving "seed to the sower, and bread to the eater" in ever widening succession. We read almost nothing of the spreading and self-renewing effects of the literature of other religions; and human culture, in its lower range, has here its limits. But words of Augustine, of Thomas à Kempis, of Howe or Butler, shot down into after centuries, have struck some great mark and decided some momentous victory. The final conversion of John

The influence of the Bible.

Christian literature.

The literature of other religions not self-renewing.

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Wesley was helped by Luther's *Preface to the Romans*. A work of Baxter influenced Doddridge; he again, Wilberforce; and Wilberforce, Chalmers. The transmissibility of Christian truth is connected with a re-transmissive impulse. The pulse of a distant success throbs back to the heart of the living Church; and the youngest child born into the family awakes the freshest joy.

The transmissibility and re-transmissive impulse of Christian truth.

The means, so amply and wonderfully provided for propagating the Gospel, are thus reinforced by the purest and strongest motives to use them. The greatness and urgency of salvation, as needed by every creature, appeals to all that is tender in sympathy and benevolence. The memory of personal obligation stirs up the sense of gratitude. The command of Christ makes a missionary spirit a duty, the imitation of His example a privilege. Zeal for the glory of God, who is dishonoured and defied in every false religion that keeps the field against His will, concentrates all that is deepest in piety on this enterprise; while reliance on the Holy Spirit, where grace alone can shake the strongholds of evil and darkness, rouses to the work all the forces and energies of faith and hope. These motives are not matched in anything else that claims to be a religion of the world. We have only to look at them, as well as at the whole structure of the system to which they belong, to see how radically different the success of Christianity,

The motives to use the means of propagating the Gospel.

No other world-religion has such motives.

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Mohammedan and Christian successes contrasted.

thus attempted and wrought, is from anything in Mohammedanism. Some better elements may mingle in that colossal scheme of conquest,—some regard to the souls of the vanquished, some fanatic sense of duty, some wild inspiration of zeal. But where is the true sense of redemption as a moral and spiritual deliverance? Where the imitation of Christ weeping over the fallen, and raising them by suffering and self-sacrifice? Where the heaven of pure affection in one enhanced by the joy of others gathered in to share it? Names mean here such different things, that only contrast is possible; and the wonder is that the success of Mohammedanism has ever been held forth as a set-off against that of Christianity.

The present state of Buddhism.

Those who know Buddhism best as an extant religion—extant in very diverse shapes—will agree that whatever its diffusive power in earlier ages may have been, the parallel wholly fails at present between it and Christianity, and that stagnation and corruption, externalism and apathy, are its most prominent features.[1]

Thus Christianity alone keeps the field as a

[1] It is hardly supposed that this estimate of the present decay of Buddhism will be contested. As to Mohammedan revival in Africa and India, the important testimony of Deutsch, in his *Literary Remains* (1874), and of writers with warmer sympathies towards Christianity, may be accepted, to the extent of proving that this religion is still strong enough to displace paganism: but this is very different from the moral creations of Christianity.

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religion of high, vigorous, and ever-advancing aspiration. It deals its blows in every part of the world, and receives very few in return. It brings in the western hemisphere to raise the fallen churches of the East, and to unite with Europe in ending the dreary Moslem reign. It assails the polytheism of Asia from two opposite sides, and hastens the day when the Christian lines shall meet. It prepares a work in Africa, where repeatedly the last explorer is the first missionary. It may be fitful, it may be transient, in touching so many points at once, like the early sunbeams, which tinge the summits only apparently to fade. But the promise of the dawn is in the first glimmer, and it will not go back till the full unbroken day has come.

Christianity unique in its character.

The work of Christianity in various parts of the world.

VI. The *sixth*, and last head under which the success of Christianity as an argument for it may be comprised, is the *harmony of this success with its own predictions and anticipations*. If the argument from prophecy be of value, when taken by itself alone, it acquires, so to speak, a compound value, when combined with any other true evidence of Christianity. Thus if a miracle is an evidence, a miracle predicted, like the going back of the shadow, or the resurrection of our Lord, is so much more wonderful; and so is it with the whole argument drawn from the character and life of Christ, which, astonishing in itself, is unspeakably

Christianity anticipated and predicted its own success.

The evidential value of miracle enhanced by prediction.

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The success of Christianity—a Divine sign in itself—enhanced in value as evidence by prediction.

more so when we find all sketched before in the pages of prophecy. But the argument is hardly anywhere more striking than in connection with the success of Christianity, which, being so marvellous as to be a Divine sign in itself, is thus by foregoing prediction complicated into a knot harder still for unbelief to untie. This argument can only be touched; but the following points may be noted.

The prediction of success early and long-continued.

First, the prediction of success *is early and long-continued.* In the very first oracle of mercy after the fall, the victory of the Christian cause is by almost all Christians held to be announced to our first parents; and it will be difficult for rationalism to put any other construction on the words, that in Abraham "all the families of the earth shall be blessed," than that they are an anticipation of spiritual good proceeding from a Jewish source, which is unaffected by all modern criticism as to the date and origin of Genesis. So is it with the

The Prophets.

notices of the Prophets, like the 11th of Isaiah, and the 2nd and 7th of Daniel. The 2nd, 72nd, 98th, and many other psalms concur in the same prediction of a universal religion. These our Lord takes up, and in terms of them, even by the admission of Strauss, foretells the success of His own cause, and this strain continues to the last New Testament writing. It is not therefore a momentary gleam which thus professedly lights up the future, but a long and steady ray.

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Secondly, the predictions are *express and definite.* It is announced that this movement should be connected with a descendant of Abraham and of David, who first suffers and then is exalted to reign; that it should start in some way from Jerusalem and Zion, whether these words are to be taken literally, or as emblems of the Jewish faith and worship; that it should have a peaceful and humanizing tendency, as in the image of wild beasts transformed, and war coming to an end; that it should abolish idolatry, and spread the faith of one God; that it should be gradual but effectual, as in the figures of the mustard-seed and leaven; and that it should at last be universal, covering the earth like the waters of the sea, and uniting all nations in sacrifice and praise. These are anticipations which cannot be blotted out, and which are so like to prophecies that they cannot be explained away; and even if it be denied that they have been entirely fulfilled (which is perhaps the most plausible thing that can be said), still they are the descriptions of a religion on the way to fulfilment, and such fulfilment as to suggest nothing but Christianity.

The predictions express and definite.

Predictions of the success of Christianity.

Thirdly, these anticipations are *very unlikely to have been set forth by mere human sagacity.* Not to mention the unlikelihood of a suffering person and cause being ultimately so successful, and that not by violence (as is predicted), but by persuasion and

The events predicted, humanly speaking, improbable.

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Unlikelihood of the predicted events.

gentleness—not to mention the great improbability of any wide cessation of idolatry or reign of righteousness—there are two features of especial unlikelihood in these notices being ever sent forth as they are given, and then accomplished. The *first* is the rejection of the Jews and the calling of the Gentiles. There was the greatest unlikelihood of this anticipation having been ever started. The Jews have never been in the deepest sense a cosmopolitan people, and at this day are as national as ever—as little disposed to accept their own inferiority or exalt other nations. But this evidently is the turn taken both in the Old Testament and in the New. The Jews and rationalists here disagree as to the Old Testament—the Jews denying that anything in it could give a plausible warrant to the Apostle Paul and his adherents to universalize Judaism, the rationalists granting that he could draw much in the Prophets to his side. But as to the actual history of the world there can be no doubt that it has followed the apparent strain of prophecy, and the clear sense of the Apostle of the Gentiles. How, then, is this to be accounted for? The Jews have lost the religious leading of the world; the Gentiles have gained it. The Old Testament is a mightier power among Christian nations than in the synagogue itself; and they have carried and are carrying the name of Jehovah along with that of Christ, where, but for

The rejection of the Jews and the calling of the Gentiles.

Jews and rationalists.

The Jews have lost the religious leading of the world; the Gentiles have gained it.

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them, idolatry would still reign, and the Decalogue be unknown. That Christianity should thus have turned round the history of the world is the wonder; that the fact should be anticipated not only in its documents, but in those of Judaism, is the phenomenon which Jew and unbeliever alike fail to explain.

The anticipation of the corruptions of Christianity.

The *second* unlikely feature of prophecy is the *anticipation of the corruptions of Christianity*. How could Christ and His apostles have connected their expectation of success on any natural principles with so much of corruption? The parable of the tares among the wheat cannot be denied to be an utterance of Christ by those who allow the Gospels any authority whatever. So is it with the repeated assertions of Paul as to a dark and evil power about to rise. So with the statements of the Johannine Epistles as to Antichrist. Nor is any construction of the Apocalypse so reasonable as that which sees in it the struggle of Christianity, not only with other adversaries, but also with its own corruptions. How, then, is this sketch of the future, in all these cases, so true and so lifelike as to have foreshadowed the unlikely reality? If Christianity was to be drawn beforehand by human hands, would so much of darkness have entered the picture? Or could the Divine strength that was to outlast all and derive glory from all, have been so forcibly appealed to and trusted in, as we see in these sober-minded

The parable of the tares.

The rise of Antichrist.

The Apocalypse.

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Absence of enthusiasm and despondency in the prediction of success.

and yet solid anticipations? There is an equal absence of enthusiasm and of despondency; and this is to be accounted for by those who have to face the resemblance of the prediction to the history, as well as by those to whom the corruptions of Christianity, though neutralized as an objection by being thus foretold, are the chief argument for its rejection.

Explanations of the early success of Christianity

II. Having now endeavoured as fairly as possible to state the arguments legitimately deduced from the success of Christianity as an argument for its Divine origin, it now remains to glance at some of the recent explanations of that success which ascribe all to mere natural principles. Here it is to be noticed that the arguments for the revived and continued success of Christianity are almost wholly passed over, and that its early period receives nearly exclusive attention. This is said not with a view of evading reply to such explanations; for in no part of the field does the ground of the Christian defender seem more secure.

The general capacity of change in human nature.

Some writers who deal with the success of Christianity on natural principles do little more than appeal to a *general* capacity of change in human nature, fortified perhaps by mention of such conversions as those in the history of other religions. This, however, is not enough to repel the argument from the success of Christianity. That men have

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been converted from one false or merely human religion to another, as Christians judge of religions, no more proves that conversions to Christianity have in them nothing special, than it proves that because one or many religions are false, therefore none is true. A mere general power of change no more accounts for conversion, than a mere general power of acting accounts for acting in a particular manner. Even those who believe most firmly in a general freedom of will, believe also in the place of motives; and nothing is rationally accounted for until some motive or power adequate to work a change is brought into the field. The Christian is prepared to adduce special reasons—all merely human—for the success of Mohammedanism or Buddhism; so must the unbeliever bring *special* reasons for the triumph of Christianity. The attempt accordingly has been made; and some of these special reasons may be considered.

The capacity for change an insufficient explanation.

The Christian prepared to explain the success of Mohammedanism and Buddhism by special human reasons.

1. Of all these theories of the success of Christianity none has been perhaps so much relied on as that which traces it to *its affinity with Greek philosophy, especially as acting on Christianity through the Jewish Platonism of Alexandria.* This is hinted at by the Jewish scholar Trypho, in his dialogue with Justin Martyr, and by Celsus as replied to by Origen; it is more fully urged by Bolingbroke and Voltaire in the last century; and it has been revived in this century by the Tübingen school, and

The alleged affinity of Christianity with Greek philosophy through Jewish Platonism.

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particularly by Strauss and Zeller. These writers, indeed, are of very unequal weight in this question. Trypho and Celsus rather bring it as a reproach against Christianity than a formal cause of its success, that it borrowed from the Greeks. Bolingbroke and Voltaire are now universally confessed to have been unequal to this discussion, reading only the Greek philosophy in translations; so that Strauss and Zeller, and others who share their learning and philosophic culture, alone represent with any authority this theory. The language of Strauss may be quoted; and it will be seen that he brings in not only philosophy, but the whole Alexandrian influences, due to Alexander the Great, to make his solution easier. "The marriage of the East and West, which was the work of the great Macedonian, must precede, and in Alexandria its bridal bed must be prepared, before the appearance of Christianity was conceivable. 'Had Alexander not preceded, Christ had not followed,' may sound to theological ears a blasphemy: but as soon as we remember that the hero too has his mission from God, its offence ceases."

Trypho and Celsus.

Bolingbroke and Voltaire.

Strauss and Zeller.

Leben Jésu (1864), p. 167.

It is impossible, however, that this scheme—which brings in Plato, with his alleged Trinity, as influencing Philo, the Alexandrian eclectic, with his fusion of philosophy and Jewish tradition, and then finds in the Hellenistic world, as prepared by Alexander the Great, a field for this kind of

The affinity of Christianity with philosophy.

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speculation, in its successive types of Paul, the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, and the Fourth Evangelist—can reach more than a fanciful and distorted resemblance to reality.

The connection of Christ with Alexandrian philosophy cannot be proved.

First, there is wanting to begin with the connection of all this with the Author of Christianity Himself. Neither Strauss nor Zeller bring Christ Himself into contact with this speculation; and thus the insuperable difficulties which lie in the way of a Christianity transformed and made more popular by inferior agents, bar the path of such an explanation.

Nothing in Platonic or Alexandrian originals to account for Christianity.

Secondly, there is nothing in the Platonic or Alexandrian originals which can account for Christianity. To say nothing of other points, such as the lower view taken even by that philosophy of the evil of sin, and the slighting estimate of the body, there is in regard to the point chiefly relied on, the doctrine of the Trinity, no solid accordance. The doctrine is with Plato too shadowy. Even in Philo, though helped by Old Testament forecasting, it has not the definiteness of coherent doctrine. Above all, it is not wrought into a great system of redemption through incarnation, atonement, and effectual grace, as in the Gospels and Epistles, and is entirely disjoined from that support in a living history of a Divine Saviour which Christianity supplies. Grant all that you will to the alleged prototypes, Christianity as a developed scheme

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Christianity immeasurably transcends Platonic and Alexandrian philosophy.

immeasurably outreaches them; and the genius (to use so low a word) which would have been required to correct, to perfect, to vivify them, would have been able to dispense with their aid.

Thirdly and lastly, this theory is refuted by the entire history of early Christianity. Instead of Platonism, or its Philonic counterpart, having originated the development which ended in the Nicene Creed and in the victory of orthodox Christianity, there was a Christian philosophy, as in Justin Martyr, which had come out of Platonism, and held itself entirely superior and distinct by the early part of the second century. The great fathers that were most Platonizing, like Origen and his disciple, Eusebius of Cæsarea, were recognized as thereby so far imperilling their Christian completeness as to the Trinity; and the revived and later Platonism, which perfected or attempted to perfect, the earlier in its own line, became, through Porphyry and Julian, the most passionate upholder of idolatry and assailant of the entire Christian faith. It is easy to bring forward the general allegation, that Christianity by giving God a Son assimilated itself to paganism, and thus secured its own victory. But those who hastily say this, whether Jews or unbelievers, forget the world-wide differences of this sonship and all that rested on it; and their deductions are as like the mistaking of a shadow for a substance as anything to be found in

An independent Christian philosophy existed early in the second century.

The later Platonism upheld idolatry.

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the philosophy of history or of religion. We may add to this consideration, that when Christianity was first brought into proximity with philosophy at Athens, the relation was not one of visible dependence. Strauss and Zeller, indeed, make little enough of the Acts; but here the Tübingen disdain has outlived its day. It is true that only the Epicureans and Stoics are represented; but had the Platonists been there, would they have hailed Paul as a brother, and as a new-born propagandist, though in barbarian guise, of their doctrines? Paul was too honest to flatter either the vulgar thought or the philosophic, and his strain, as the heaven-sent revealer of that which both had missed, is as historically just as it is itself sincere and sublime.

The relations of Christianity and philosophy when brought into proximity at Athens.

2. Another special cause which has been assigned for the success of Christianity in the early years is *the influence of rulers, and especially of Constantine.* This is a supposition which, after Voltaire, has been repeated in our time by Mr. F. W. Newman. But on the face of it, this view has not much plausibility. It is like casting the iron sword of Brennus into the scale, when the gold of philosophy was too light to affect it. There can be no serious question of any earlier political influence than that of Constantine; and when we come to him, amidst all the difficulties of his relation to Christianity, there can be none as to the fact that his ultimate support was in no proper sense the cause of its

The alleged influence of rulers as a cause of the success of Christianity.

Constantine's influence.

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Constantine's support not intelligent.

triumph. Even if we grant that his support was sincere, it certainly was not intelligent, as we see from the delay of his baptism and his vacillations as to the Trinity; and it will probably now be agreed on almost all hands, that in the divided state of the Roman empire, those measures which he took in favour of Christianity that were of the nature of special succour, and still more of repression and coercion, would have been advantageously replaced so far as the farther conversion of pagans was concerned, by simple protection of its worship and liberties. In this way the reaction under Julian might have been avoided, and Christianity spared the reproach of some actions under Constantine's reign, of which, from his association with it, the new religion had to bear the burden. But if this be a just historical estimate, then the influence of Constantine for good as a whole must have been less than this supposition, which is now examined, takes for granted; and can hardly be thought by any fair mind the decisive impulse in favour of a religion which had subsisted and struggled for nearly three hundred years. Two instances of the nature of tests make this still more clear. Had the opinion of the Roman world been merely decided in favour of Christianity by one emperor, it might equally have gone back to paganism under the prompting of another. But we all know how futile the

His measures not the best in the circumstances.

His influence not the decisive impulse in favour of Christianity

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zealous efforts of Julian in that direction proved, and how rapidly after his failure the conversions to Christianity multiplied, with other evidences of its unabated and irresistible progress. The other instance is equally striking—the total miscarriage of the Roman emperors to give victory to Arianism. Had the minds of men as to religion been so flexible, it would have been much easier to turn an ordinary Christian into an Arian, than a pagan into a Christian. We know how earnestly this was tried, and how numerous the creeds were, which, under the patronage of emperors like Constantius and Valens, to say nothing of Constantine himself, were framed and circulated to make the orthodox believe that Arianism repeated with a slight difference their own faith. But the perspicacity and zeal of Athanasius and his followers in all parts of the Roman world defeated the attempt; and in Theodosius the empire had to confess its weakness, and again submit. It shows ignorance, therefore, of the currents which ultimately determine human opinion in moral questions, to overrate the influence of earthly potentates; and Christianity has often enough, even its corrupt forms, defied kings and emperors, to suppose it in its greater purity and strength dependent on them for existence or triumph.

The failure of Julian to restore Paganism.

The failure of Roman emperors to give victory to Arianism.

It shows ignorance to overrate the influence of rulers.

3. A *third* special cause which has been relied on as accounting for the success of Christianity in

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The hope of an earthly millennium alleged as the cause of the success of Christianity.

its early period, is *the hope which it awakened of an earthly millennium.* This hope has been painted in lively colours by Gibbon, and after him by Renan, together with the alarm excited in pagan minds by the prospect of an impending end of the world.

Gibbon.

One can hardly read the passages in Gibbon that bear on this subject, where the irony is of the keenest, without feeling that he is inwardly laughing at the credulity alike of the early Christians in cherishing such hopes, and of the pagans in so

Renan.

readily accepting them. Hence Renan seems to judge it necessary to bring in something more solid to sustain these millennary fancies; and this he finds in the exalted Christian morality, which, with the vision of a millennium, he alike traces back to Christ. "It was this contradiction which assured

Millennarianism and morality.

the success of his work. The millennarian alone would have produced nothing durable, the moralist alone would have produced nothing powerful. Millennarianism gave the impulse, morality assured the future. Thus the union of the two re-united the conditions of great success in this world—a revolutionary start, and the possibility of life." [1]

In canvassing this speculation, it is not necessary to inquire what the actual views of a millennium, held from the beginning in the Christian Church, were. Multitudes of Christian writers deny such a prevalence of these hopes or fears of a peculiarly

[1] *Vie de Jésus*, p. 126.

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earthly tinge in the Christian Church, as Gibbon and Renan have accepted as realities. Even those Christian writers who have perhaps exaggerated any tendencies of this kind, have yet refused to allow that the future was to the early Christian mind so deeply pre-occupied with the temporal side of glory or of change, and have not altogether left out of account the counter-indications of belief in a long-standing future of the world, such as was needful to realize Christ's own predictions of growth and of corruption and decay in His religion. But even if we should grant (which is an enormous concession) that to those who were already Christians these terrestrial hopes were all that Gibbon and Renan have pictured them, where was the lever in this by which to move the pagan mind, and bring it round to Christianity? There was to begin with unspeakable social loss, and even ruin; there was an utter sacrifice of worldly prospects, to be compensated in the near or distant future by temporal gains and honours. But who vouched for these? A "sect everywhere spoken against," proscribed, derided, the least credible to pagan minds of all heralds of the future, or pathfinders to glory—themselves deceived, on the supposition of unbelief, by a barbarian founder who was crucified, and had never since been seen in the clouds of heaven or anywhere else. The nearest parallel to such credulity would be that of Kaffirs slaughtering

The prevalence of earthly millennarian hopes denied by many Christian writers.

Conceding what Gibbon and Renan allege, the hopes afford no leverage sufficient to bring Pagans to Christianity.

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A modern parallel to the supposed credulity of the early Christians.

their cattle at the voice of witch-doctors, in the hope of emancipation thereby from the British yoke, nay, prevailing on British settlers to share a coming glory at the same sacrifice; or of Mormons breaking all their ties in Europe, and emigrating to some unknown centre, which had as yet no locality, and which only a prophet's vision assured them would one day be found, and found blooming like a paradise. How different the actual Mormon emigrations have proved, resting no doubt on much delusion, but also on much solid fact and geographical knowledge,—on much that appeals to the love of adventure and moral laxity,—on much that belongs to the unrest of real humanity, with a sufficient background of ocular testimony and professed experience to give it play, every one can judge. And yet Mormonism has not yet lasted through the changes of centuries, or moved the civilized world as Christianity has done, to make the parallel, which is after all so radically adverse to this hypothesis, other than almost an insult to the Gospel of Christ. The longer we reflect on this explanation, the more does it seem almost to demand an apology for its production; and that the Christian morality should be associated with this dream, and give it weight, is one of those combinations which are found so easy to the genius of Renan, but which so little reflect the sobrieties or even the caprices of history. Let it be added that

The millenarian explanation quite insufficient.

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hope deferred would here soon have made the heart sick; and in what a mood Christians would have been to practise that morality, which is all, after the failure of their "revolutionary start," that Renan leaves them, it is more easy than pleasant to conjecture.

4. A *fourth* explanation of the success of Christianity, it is only needful in the briefest way to touch upon, that which ascribes all to *priestcraft*. This scheme, after the English deists, has hardly any supporters, or only those who are so far down in the literary scale as to command in this century but little sympathy. The Christian advocate has indeed to confess that this has too often, amid the corruptions of Christianity, been a *vera causa* of the success of particular devices and the currency of special usages that were supposed to be helpful to, or connected with, the success of Christianity. But it must be contended, on the other hand, that nothing of the nature of pious fraud, or even of the superstitious exaltation of mere rites and offices, has in the long run helped Christianity, but rather burdened it and impaired its authority. Even those necessary accompaniments of Christianity—its sacraments and its Gospel ministry — have through undue claims and estimates often provoked a reaction; and, generally speaking, it may be said that Christianity has suffered by what lay under the suspicion of priestcraft far more than

The alleged influence of priestcraft as a cause of the success of Christianity.

Pious fraud and superstition injure rather than help Christianity.

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Christianity has suffered from priestcraft.

it has drawn from this source to its advantage. And if not only real priestcraft must be discounted as loss, but all that could with any colour be ascribed to it must be regarded as on human calculations of success a doubtful help, what shall we say where even the conditions of priestcraft coming into play did not exist beforehand at all? This whole argument must be excluded from the early history of Christianity, where confessedly priestcraft had no previous faith in itself to work upon and to bend to its selfish and impure purposes. Men will be duped to their own undoing where a prior acceptance of certain tenets, or trust in certain rites or persons, blinds their eyes; but to suppose them, without any previous acceptance of Christianity, so prepared for the snare, either proves them a great deal more silly, or the preachers of Christianity a great deal more artful than is consistent with historic fact. In short, this explanation falls out of the context of the nineteenth century; and though more respectable writers are not always consistent with themselves, and sometimes mix up the old hypothesis of imposture and falsification with the more new and plausible one of heated fancy and enthusiasm, these require to be rigorously separated; and when this is done, the supposition of cold and wary paganism being seduced by the wiles and machinations of primitive Christianity, that had little to offer it but loss and martyr-

Nothing in early Christianity on which priestcraft could work.

The objection untenable in the present day.

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dom, is too incoherent to endure farther examination.

Such are some of the best attempts that have been made to explain the success of Christianity at its origin; and the reader must be left to judge of them or any similar ones that may be adduced. But as already remarked, they would only explain the ancient, not the continued and recent success of the Gospel. Where is now any school of philosophy in the whole world from which Christianity can be said specially to borrow, or on which to lean? Where is there any Constantine, with commanding and overshadowing power, who is the great world-wide confessor and patron of the Gospel? Where the kindling, absorbing hope of an earthly millennium at the door, proclaimed in all Christian hymns and sermons, and heard with awe in all non-Christian circles? Where is the visible alliance of Christianity with priestcraft, when in almost all its sections—at least Protestant—it is finding even a regular ministry a mark widely shot at, and brings the laity to the front to meet the assault? The deniers of Christianity in our day must prepare at this point entirely different theses, and undergo a change in their whole line of controversy, such as Christianity has never yet had to submit to, in regard to any considerable article either of its faith or evidence.

The continued and recent success of Christianity inexplicable on any unbelieving theory of its original successes.

Unbelief must completely change its front to-day.

Meanwhile, Christianity still advances. It will

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The advance of Christianity.

not abate its successes because the world cannot explain, or even tries to ignore, them. If this were a mere intellectual problem, it might forbear to multiply new difficulties before the old were solved and put away. But where would be, then, its own philanthropy, if it left mankind unhealed, because the cure was inexplicable or even denied? Happy if those who cannot account for the fact in others, would put it to the test in personal experiment. It might become then soluble, when the point of survey was altered, and also the exploring organ, according to the deep philosophy of all true Christian insight: "One thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see." The "credo ut intelligam" of Anselm would then light up the whole success of Christianity with a sense of sympathetic brotherhood, not otherwise to be attained or even conceived. And the victory of the past would be at once a personal and a collective guarantee of the future, according to the sublime saying of Pascal, which applies equally to the Christian and to Christianity, "that it is pleasant to be in a ship beaten by storms, provided there be the certainty that amidst all it can never sink."[1]

Christianity appeals to the test of personal experience.

Pascal's saying.

[1] *Pensées*, I. 324. Faugère's Edition.

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CHRISTIANITY AND MIRACLES

AT THE PRESENT DAY.

BY THE

REV. PRINCIPAL CAIRNS, D.D.

AUTHOR OF "UNBELIEF IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY"
(*Being the Cunningham Lecture for* 1880.)

THE RELIGIOUS TRACT SOCIETY:
56, PATERNOSTER ROW; 65, ST. PAUL'S CHURCHYARD; AND
164, PICCADILLY.

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The Argument of the Tract.

MIRACLES are shown to be, on the supposition of the existence of God, neither impossible in themselves, inconsistent with the order of nature, incapable of being proved by testimony, nor incapable of being decisively connected with God.

The marvellous character of the Bible, the transcendent character of the morality of the Bible, the harmony of the miracles of the Bible with its doctrine, are shown to be presumptions in favour of the miracles of Scripture.

The historical testimony to the miracles of the New Testament, and especially our Lord's Resurrection, is examined, and its bearing on this fact is shown. The Resurrection of Christ is shown to account for all the undeniable facts of the history, and the insufficiency of any theory that denies its reality to account for them is proved.

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CHRISTIANITY AND MIRACLES

AT THE PRESENT DAY.

THE alliance between Christianity and miracles is of long standing, in fact is inherited from the Old Testament religion; and for eighteen centuries, friend and foe have been here agreed, the one rallying to this position as an entrenchment of their own; the other, though sometimes affecting to despise it, not less looking askance upon it as an adverse stronghold. In our unsettled time, when everything is questioned, and not a little rashly abandoned, the argument for the truth of Christianity from miracles is in some quarters less insisted on. There are even Christian minds that have begun to waver at this point; while others, on the opposite side, are perhaps nearer believing their own illusive difficulties than at any former period. I am persuaded, however, that this discrediting of miracles is a great mistake, and that no procedure could be less wise than that of writers in the Christian ranks who seek here to change front in the midst of action.

Inseparable connection between Christianity and miracles

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Christianity—if it be worth anything as a remedy, —is so essentially supernatural in its inmost essence and provisions that it cannot be detached from miracles without losing its virtue; and though there may be shades and varieties as well as improvements, in the way of putting this argument, nay, lawful differences as to its ultimate value in relation to other grounds of Christian belief, it must still take rank as a leading proof; and the nineteenth century, not less than the first, must accept of Christ's own challenge, "If I do not the works of My Father, believe Me not." Persuaded then, with ever-growing conviction, of the solidity of this argument, and of the futility of the objections drawn from metaphysics, from history, and from science against it, I shall endeavour, within the compass of this tract, to set it forth in the light of the present day.

Definition of a miracle.

It is necessary, in discussing this question, to begin with some definition of a miracle, so as to understand in what sense it is here employed. It may be spoken of then as an act of God which visibly deviates from the ordinary working of His power, designed, while capable of serving other uses, to authenticate a Divine message.

The argument restricted to theists.

This restricts the argument to theists. Unless there be belief in a God able and willing to make and attest a revelation, the whole argument

Hume.

from miracles is below the horizon. Had Hume

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been more thorough-going he would have taken his stand against miracles as excluded by his scepticism as to God. Had Spinoza been more open in his earlier treatise, he would not, while professing to believe in God, have assumed that the wisdom of God did not admit of either a revelation or such a proof of it; for this belonged to his later pantheism. And had Strauss, in our own days, been a more strict controversialist, he would not have wasted so much of his life in criticising the discords of the evangelists, but would have rested in his fundamental exclusion of God, that made the whole scheme of Christianity from the first incredible and subversive of reason. No one has been here more candid than the late Mr. John S. Mill. He sees that miracles belong to, and only belong to, the supposition of theism; and whatever may be thought of his objections to them, as not sufficiently proved to have existed in God's actual world, he deserves great credit for having admitted that the belief in miracles is perfectly rational on the part of a believer in God, and that it is a question of evidence and not of *à priori* theory.

Spinoza.

Strauss.

J. S. Mill. His candour.

With this preliminary clearing up of the state, and even of the terms, of the question, a number of mistakes that have gathered round it fall away of themselves. Some of these may be briefly noticed. The first mistake is, *that miracles are*

Mistakes about miracles.

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Miracles not impossible.

impossible. To this much of the scepticism of our time verges, even where it does not bluntly assert it. Possibly this may be, because our unbelief has found by experience, that it is not safe to grant so much as the being of a moral and personal Deity. Miracles of course fall with the denial of the only Being who can exercise a moral government, who can, in connexion with that government, make a revelation, and who can so work in the physical world as to connect that revelation with His own Divine power. It is seen at once that if God be possible, miracles are possible; and that hence nothing can preclude them but abstract atheism, or pantheism, or such agnosticism as makes the knowledge of God hopeless. It is a great consolation to the Christian that his belief in miracles can only be uprooted by virtual denial of God.

Miracles possible if God be possible.

Miracles not inconsistent with the order of nature.

A second mistake, not so extreme, but still serious, is, that miracles are *inconsistent with the order of nature.* In so far as this puts nature in the place of God, and keeps Him bound, as nature is without Him held to be, by absolutely invariable laws, this is the same denial of God that has been already considered. So far, however, as the position taken is, that God has chosen to act in ways so invariable as to exclude miracle, and has revealed to us that choice, the distinction thus drawn easily leads to the discovery of the mistake. There would need to be full and conclusive

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evidence that it is God's will and choice to exclude miracle altogether from the realm of what is called nature, but which is only to a theist the field of God's own working. Is there, then, this full and conclusive evidence? It cannot be by revelation: for this would be to bring in revelation to exclude revelation. It can only be by what is called light of nature; and the question recurs, Does the light of nature absolutely exclude any possible deviation by God from the wonted sequences of His operation? This would exclude every beginning and end of the universe, and every cosmical change that was not in the strictest sense the working out of foregoing law. On what can a scepticism so rigorous be based? It has been attempted to base it on our primary belief in the uniformity of nature, which is thus regarded as the voice of God to us warning us against trust in miracles. But is this so? Philosophers still dispute as to how far the expectation of uniformity in nature is a rational principle of knowledge or a mere instinct. But one thing is clear, that it cannot exclude the weighing of evidence for miracle; otherwise, the origin or end of the world, considered as a scientific possibility, would be as summarily rejected as any hypothesis confessedly against reason. Canon Mozley has shown conclusively against Mr. Mill that the progress of science cannot exclude belief in miracle,

No evidence that God would exclude miracles from nature.

Consequences of such exclusion.

Uniformity of nature cannot exclude weighing of evidence for miracle.

Canon Mozley *v.* Mr. Mill.

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for the very principle of induction on which science builds involves itself this prior belief in the uniformity of nature, which can thus receive from science no greater strength than it has at first.

Mr. Mill's strange language.

Nothing is more strange than the language of Mr. Mill as to the growing impossibility of belief in miracle as science advances; for this would leave the belief a scientific one to Sir Isaac Newton, or even to Hume and Gibbon, and deny it as such to Professor Huxley or Renan; not to mention that this assertion is entirely opposed to facts, as some of the most eminent men of science are still believers in miracles; and Mr. Mill himself finds a consolation in clinging to their possibility and the supernatural mission of Jesus Christ. The admission of miracles does not at all depend on a lax or unscientific conception of the course of nature. In fact it can only build on recognized natural laws; and the discernment of these, and of exceptions to them, was as possible in the first century as in the nineteenth, as the words in the gospel history indicate: "Since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind." This limited, exceptional, divinely regulated minimum of deviation, which leaves nature and science still standing as before, is all that Christianity asks in order to start this argument, and no principle of natural belief can pronounce the postulate inadmissible.

Admission of miracles can only build on recognized natural laws.

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Besides, it is to be remembered that while in one sense miracles set aside law, in another and deeper sense, they uphold it. The end of miracle, through the coming and works of Christ, is the restoration of moral order. The coming of Christ as a sinless Being is a miracle. Christianity is not an ordinary history, or even a great moral system incorporated with the life of its founder. It is, if it is anything, a system of Redemption, based on the Incarnation of Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and upon the grace of the Holy Spirit, with a sequel of eternal results and issues, greater through union with Christ or separation from Him, than the ordinary immortality with its hopes and fears. This scheme is wrought out by the life and death, the dominion and influence, the second coming to judgment, and endless reign of Jesus Christ. Now, this whole plan and system transcends natural laws, in any common acceptation of the word. It is believed to be in harmony with the highest laws of the Divine nature, and to be the most glorious expression of them. But it is born of, and lives by miracle, so that to refuse faith in this, is to make sin the order of the universe. And if Christ needed to displace physical law, in order to vindicate and restore moral and spiritual law, the conception of the universe which would exclude this interference is really a materialistic superstition, and so far from exalting God as the

Miracles uphold law.

Christianity a system of Redemption based on incarnation.

It is the most glorious expression of the highest laws.

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God of order, it surrounds Him and His creatures with an outward barrier that shuts the way even to the "tree of life." It is by dwelling on the order of nature without that a prejudice against miracles has been created. A glance at the disorder of nature within restores the balance; and with the need, recalls the probability of a remedy, and of a remedy attended by miracle.

A *third* mistake as to miracles is, *that even if wrought they could not be proved by testimony.* This is the celebrated argument of Hume, first published in a set of his essays, in 1748, but which has not carried conviction, as he expected, and has even lately been declared by Mr. Mill to be inconclusive. Mr. Mill in his *Essay on Theism* (p. 217), says, "It is evidently impossible to maintain that if a supernatural fact really occurs, proof of its occurrence cannot be accessible to the human faculties. The evidence of the senses could prove this as it can prove other things." Hume, however, never looks the senses in connection with miracles in the face. He dwells exclusively on testimony, and thus tacitly leaves it to be supposed that miracles are only matters of testimony; and this testimony he makes necessarily fallacious: for his argument is that our confidence in testimony being due entirely to experience can never warrant our believing any reported departure from experience. If Hume had gone farther back,

Hume's argument.

Mr. Mill's opinion of it.

Hume's fallacy.

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and supposed an eye-witness dealing with a miracle, he could not have advised that eye-witness to reject the miracle, simply because the testimony of others had never reported anything like it; and then that eye-witness could not have been reasonably disbelieved himself, since testimony could not fail to convey what sense had vouched for. Hume, it is true, could not himself believe a miracle, because his philosophy left him in total doubt as to God. But it was otherwise with believers in God: and his assault on testimony had no value except as resting on his own premises. It may be added, that there is a shadow of Hume's error in the not uncommon objection to miracles, that they lose their force with time, and at length vanish away. Why should this be so with miracles more than with secular history? The death of Ananias and Sapphira is as near to us as the assassination of Julius Cæsar. Tradition loses its weight by successive removes, but not written history. Grant that the Apostle John is the author of the fourth Gospel, his testimony is as good to us as if we had received it orally from himself. There is a signal absence of the historical sense in this objection; and there is no reason to think that an historian like Hume, if he could have granted miracles as once credible, would have supposed them decaying, though this idea only carries his distrust in testimony to a more paradoxical extreme.

The cause of Hume's scepticism.

Miracles do not lose their force with time.

The relative value of tradition and written history.

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Miracles appeal to prior belief in God.

The three mistakes as to miracles which have been considered are all due to forgetfulness of the fact that miracle appeals to a prior belief in God; and they are redressed when His agency and relation to nature are recalled to view. The same thing holds true of a *fourth* mistake, and the last which we shall notice, which still exerts a disturbing influence on some judgments: viz., *that miracles cannot be so decisively connected with God as to lend any sanction to an alleged revelation.* There is evidently no force in the general allegation, that mere power can lend no support to teaching: for power is appealed to as a link to connect the teaching with God, and if such a connection be secured its authority is then boundless. All ages have felt this, and have re-echoed the simple confession of Nicodemus, "We know that Thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that Thou doest except God be with him." But the complaint is that though the connection, if it could be made out, would serve the end, the connection cannot be decisively established, since works apparently miraculous may still be due to ordinary laws, and not to Divine interposition, or may even (so it is pleaded on Scripture grounds) be wrought by evil beings. This objection has often been taken, and is renewed among others by the author of *Supernatural Religion.*

Miracles can connect teaching with God.

The connection can be decisively established.

The author of *Supernatural Religion.*

Now, it may be granted that at times the

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defenders of revelation have undertaken too much by speaking as if a line could in all cases be drawn to mark off miracle from nature, whereas it was enough to fix on the leading miracles of the Bible as decisively supernatural in their character, since with these alone was there any concern: and it may be also admitted that Christian writers have differed somewhat in their interpretation of those passages of Scripture which connect miracle, or the appearance of it, with evil agency. Neither of these circumstances, however, abates the evidential value of the Bible miracles. They still stand out as sharply as ever—distinguished from all natural phenomena. It is because rationalism could not reduce them to natural facts, that it tried to make them myths. No science can ever reduce to its uniformities, a fact, if fact it be, like the death of the first-born in one night. The cures of our Lord seem still as little like the fruits of secret medical knowledge as in His own day; while the most thorough-going scepticism rejects most scornfully the theory that His resurrection was a mere natural recovery from an incompleted death. There is thus in the miracles of the Bible—abating some obscure instances—a broad stamp of distinction from extraordinary, though still natural phenomena; while there is a plan, a method, a reigning spirit, which takes them completely out of the region of the mere random wonders and portents

Miracles and nature.

Bible miracles distinguished from all natural phenomena.

The reason of the myth theory.

Our Lord's miracles as inexplicable as ever on natural grounds.

Distinguished from mere random wonders and portents.

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of Livy, or the childish marvels of the later ecclesiastical historians. It may be confidently affirmed that if the Bible miracles are not recognizably Divine, none can be so; and thus the extreme sceptical position would be reached, that a Being who wished to make a revelation, and sought to attest it by a seal, which the general sense of mankind has connected with such a communication, could not thus stamp it by any sign of distinctive power.

The theory of evil agency.

Equally futile is the objection that the alleged Bible miracles may be due to evil agency. The deniers of revelation do not themselves believe in such agency, superior to human, yet adverse to the Divine: but only bring it in to perplex and disconcert Christians. But if they borrow this Christian doctrine, to turn it against its own adherents, they ought to remember the limitation within which it is held. However Christians may differ as to the amount of confusion which evil beings may be permitted to introduce by working what may be mistaken for miracle, they all hold that under the government of God, sufficient light is granted to make the distinction possible to every humble and candid mind, either by the true power which is Divine visibly transcending every other, or by moral features in the revelation appealing to conscience, in a way which no pseudo-revelation can counterfeit. The Christian is thus not em-

The Christian doctrine of evil agency.

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barrassed by this *argumentum ad hominem*, and what is equally important to the validity of this reasoning, neither is the theist.

The theist to whom the Christian offers the Bible, and with whom he argues on the ground of miracle, cannot deny that the supreme Power may be able to outshine, even to human eyes, on this field, all rivalry, and still more, to interweave the revelation professedly given with such moral features and accompaniments, that no fair observer can trace it up to an evil source. The reasoning of our Lord with the Pharisees, that Satan could not cast out Satan, was no doubt addressed to believers in revelation; but it is equally applicable to believers in God simply, who as such cannot believe in Him without believing that all agencies and events are under His control, and that He will not suffer the elements of nature to be so turned out of their course by evil beings as to mimic any supposed signature of God or defeat His purpose—if He has one—thus to confirm a revelation. Who ever heard of any theist who was prepared to say, "I admit an element of miracle, so far as God's working, otherwise known to us, is concerned. I allow the credibility of miracles in the abstract, and I allow the moral features of the Bible to be reconcilable with a Divine origin; but I cannot decide that they have one, because the apparent signs may be due to

Our Lord's reasoning about evil agency applicable to mere theists.

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evil powers not sufficiently restrained." Now, it is with theists that we reason here, and not with the author of *Supernatural Religion;* and till he can bring us theists who are satisfied on other grounds, but take their last stand against the gospel on this, all his air-drawn difficulties go for nothing.

Presumptions in favour of Christian miracles.

Having thus endeavoured to remove these mistakes as to miracles, it might be our next task, as it is our principal one, to go on to the evidence of fact and history, that the Christian miracles have actually been wrought. But in order to do justice to the argument, it is necessary first to state some presumptions, which lead up as it were to this conclusion, and pre-dispose the mind—great as the demand made upon faith by miracles is—to concede it. The considerations about to be named are of varying weight; and they are evidences of the truth of Christianity by themselves; nay, in one case, more central to the proof than even miracles; nor are they the only ones that might be named. But they are here brought forward only as leading up and lending help, to the direct argument drawn from miracle in the common sense of the word.

The wonderful nature of the book in which they are recorded.

There may be mentioned then, *first*, as a presumption in favour of the reality of the Bible miracles, the wonderful nature of the book in which they are recorded. There is here what

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may be called a *literary* miracle. I do not ask any one at this point to believe in inspiration, and from the self-evident inspiration of the Bible to accept this part of its contents,—though there can be little doubt that this self-evident superiority to all other books goes a long way to secure for the Bible claim to inspiration its wide acceptance. But it is not because the book is divinely true, that I ask it to be here regarded; but because it is outstandingly wonderful. This fact no one, even the most sceptical, can deny. The Bible is itself a phenomenon, embracing master-pieces in every department of literature, from the most unlikely hands. Renan, for slight reasons, denies that the Gospel of Matthew is the work of a Jewish publican; but he admits that it is of equally obscure origin, and yet says that, "all things considered, it is the most important book of Christianity, the most important book that ever has been written."[1] The Gospel of Luke, he grants to be the work of its received author; and says, in regard to the Saviour's birth, "This exquisite pastoral, traced with a gentle outline upon the front of Christianity, has never been surpassed by any strain more fitted to lull the woes of poor humanity;"[2] and in general, he says of this Gospel, "It is the most beautiful book in the world."[3] Of the Gospels as a whole, he also says,

Inspiration not assumed.

Renan's opinion of the Gospel of Matthew.

Renan on St. Luke and the Gospels as a whole.

[1] *Evangiles*, page 212. [2] Page 278. [3] Page 283.

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"The composition of the Gospels is, next to the personal action of Jesus, the capital fact in the history of the origin of Christianity,—I will add, in the history of humanity."[1] It would be easy, were it necessary, to quote other tributes to the stupendous literary greatness of the Bible. One may be taken from Gibbon, where he contrasts the Book of Job with the Koran; and it is all the more remarkable as belonging to a century, in which, as Macaulay says, Voltaire decried Ezekiel in the same narrow spirit as he did Shakespeare. "The harmony and copiousness of style will not reach in a version the European infidel: he will peruse with impatience the endless incoherent rhapsody of faith and precept and declamation, which seldom excites a sentiment or an idea, which sometimes crawls in the dust and is sometimes lost in the clouds. The Divine attributes exalt the fancy of the Arabian missionary; but his loftiest strains must yield to the sublime simplicity of the Book of Job, composed in a remote age, in the same country, and in the same language."[2]

Gibbon on the Book of Job and the Koran.

The Bible is confessedly the greatest classic in the English or German language: we may add, even in the French: and its influence has immeasurably transcended that of all others. Does not this agree with the supposition of miracle in connection with the system to which it belongs? Could the pre-

The Bible a classic in English, German, and French.

[1] *Evangiles*, p. 213. [2] Gibbon (Bohn's Ed.), Vol. v. p. 474.

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sumption be greater? and how world-wide is the contrast, as Gibbon acknowledges in regard to Mahometanism, with every other religion?

The morality associated with Bible miracles.

A *second* presumption, even stronger, for the reality of the Bible miracles, is the transcendent character of the morality with which they are associated. At no point has Christianity come out of the struggle of centuries stronger than here. The greatest of moralists like Kant have treated the New Testament as containing a full moral system; and attacks on the Christian morality, as erring, either by excess or defect, have to a large extent ceased. Mr. Mill, who, in his essay on *Liberty*, had charged Christianity on this head with at least incompleteness, has in one of his posthumous *Essays* made the remarkable statement, that no one could find a better rule of life than to act in every case so as that Christ would approve of his conduct. The only really influential objections to the Christian morality are those connected with its difficulty, and its failure to realize itself among professed Christians; and this has caused the gospel to suffer more than all other hindrances put together, for the inconsistencies of Christian nations and churches have been seen and read of all men, while the excuses for those failures, and even the attempts to clear Christianity from this reproach, have not been equally successful in impressing the general mind. Still it

Kant on New Testament morality.

Mill's admission.

Inconsistencies of Christian nations and Churches.

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is a great and singular thing for any system of morality to be complained of chiefly because it is too high and ideal; while at the same time all candid minds allow that Christianity has here been immensely effectual in elevating the moral standard of the world, and in bringing round a state of things when its own strictness and elevation shall seem less hopeless as a prevailing aspiration and attainment. What is true of the New Testament here is inclusive of the Old. They must be partial judges who deny here a radical identity, which Christ Himself and His Apostles, notwithstanding some difficulties of fact and interpretation, acknowledged between the earlier and later development of the same revelation. The Old Testament had something of the same height relatively to everything outside itself as the teaching and institutions of Christianity still have; for what could be found among ancient nations with anything of the same practical weight and impression as the Decalogue, the Psalms, the Book of Proverbs, and the moral lessons of the Prophets; while these have all been found capable of being taken up into, and mingling their force with, the mightier impulses of Christianity? That a great moral system like this should be connected with miracle, and gain its support, is something totally different from the transient, scattered, and for the most part legendary

The effect of Christianity on the world's moral standard.

The Old Testament.

Its relative superiority to contemporary systems

The connection of the whole system with miracles.

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and useless miracles that rise up out of the mere love of the marvellous, or under the spell of superstition. The purpose is truly great and god-like, worthy of miracle if miracle could help, and, taken in conjunction with the success which has so far followed, warrants the presumption that miracle has here been at work, and not in vain.

Christian miracles and doctrines in harmony.

The *third* and the only other presumption which shall be noticed here for the reality of the Bible miracles, is their harmony with the doctrinal system which they are brought in to establish. It is a common fault of those who undervalue miracles to overlook this, and to treat the miracle and the doctrine as something belonging to different spheres, and only externally applied to each other, somehow as the royal stamp on a book is to its contents. But in point of fact, the whole of Christianity relatively to ordinary teaching is inward miracle; and out of this the miracle, commonly so called, grows as a product, and hence as a witness. The common Christian view of the birth of Jesus Christ—of the union in Him of the Divine and human natures—of His atonement and intercession, and of His exaltation to dispense the Holy Ghost and reign over the spirits of men in His Church, and even outwardly in the universe, all this is so far from being God's visibly ordinary way of action as disclosed in natural Providence, that it rises above the thoughts

The whole of Christianity relatively inward miracle.

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of men as far as the heavens are above the earth. Hence this scheme, in its whole texture supernatural, cannot be carried through without special acts occurring that have been distinctively called miracles, though they are not more miraculous than the rest. For one who is God incarnate to rise from the dead is not more miraculous than to be God incarnate; nor is it so to ascend to heaven, and thence to usher in the day of Pentecost, and to control and govern the Church by His Holy Spirit. There must be miracle, if there is to be salvation. The laws of human nature must be transcended by the Divine being united with the human. The human body could not be surrendered to defeat, and the incarnation so far be made void by the Saviour remaining in the grave. Nor could the same law that applied to others who were raised, limit the risen life of Christ, or detain Him upon earth. Miracles had thus, according to the true Christian conception, a deeper design than to be evidences of Christianity. They had to be vital and integral parts of Christianity. But this did not hinder them from being evidences too; and as evidences they have a reason and a credibility which would be wholly wanting if they were extraneous and supplementary parts engrafted upon an otherwise non-miraculous system. Take for example our Lord's so-called miracles of healing. Would it have been more credible that the Son

The scheme could not be carried through without miracles.

Miracle necessary to salvation.

Miracles integral parts of Christianity as well as evidences.

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of God, invested with Divine powers, should stand in the midst of human disease and misery, without any outburst of mightier sympathy and help, and that He should be warned back by the very laws of nature that were His own creation? Or is it not credible that He should in these cures have revealed and imaged His deeper power to heal the soul? When from the starting-point of Christianity He could not be a Saviour at all without miracle, is there not in the expansion and development of this principle, and in the applying of it as He does to support His own claims, a beautiful inward harmony which is a presumption of truth, so that never could any religion set forth this evidence from so lofty and consistent a ground as that of Him who says, "Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? the words that I speak unto you, I speak not of Myself; but the Father that dwelleth in Me, He doeth the works."

Incredible that Christ should not work miracles.

Miracles symbolical.

Conclusion from this argument.

With these explanatory and introductory remarks, it is now time to consider the argument for the reality of the Bible miracles as positively attested by history. The argument is very extended, taking in the Old Testament as well as the New. But it has been universally felt that the strength of the argument lies most in the New Testament period, because, while the Old Testament wonders are sufficiently attested, and are

Historical proof of Bible miracles.

Old Testament miracles.

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even vouched for in the New Testament, while also held up by the ever-increasing authority of the Old Testament in matters of ordinary history, there is not the same abundance of contemporary literature, nor reigning clearness in regard to the authorship of books, and similar matters affecting testimony. The question shall, therefore, be limited to the miracles of the New Testament, though every one can see that the miracles of the Old Testament are not to be looked on as a hindrance, but a help; and we can understand how different our position would have been had the New Testament revelation been confirmed by striking miracles, while the Old Testament oracles did not enjoy the help of so much as one. Again, among the New Testament miracles, those of Christ Himself are the most fitted to attract close and prolonged study; and among these, by universal consent, one stands out as pre-eminently important, the miracle of His Resurrection. Even an unbeliever may be impressed by the thought that Christ (as recorded) rested His claims on this sign, in preference to others; for it has turned out to be the strongest, and this by any natural means Christ could not have known.

Their relation to New Testament miracles.

The miracles of Christ

The pre-eminent importance of His Resurrection.

In considering the evidence of Christ's resurrection, the same method is perhaps best taken which is employed in any other question of fact. Nothing is taken for granted, but that a miracle like the

The starting-point of the argument.

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resurrection may be a fact of history: all else is proved like any other matter which history may embrace. And this is proved by three sets of arguments:—*first*, the positive testimonies, more or less direct, to the fact of the resurrection; *secondly*, the agreement of this supposition with other facts in the history; and *thirdly*, the failure of every other supposition opposed to the resurrection to account for these facts.

Three sets of argument.

In discussing, then, the testimonies, it is best to begin with those that are farthest off from the centre; and here there is to be placed in the outer circle the unanimous, unbroken belief of the whole Christian Church of the first century from the beginning. This indeed is not direct testimony; but it is testimony in so far as the consenting belief of contemporaries who are interested in a matter of fact, and have every motive to test it, is testimony to its historical reality. No Christian could become one without believing in the resurrection, and without avowing it. Christianity was thus built on alleged fact from the beginning, as if Mahomet had been held to have been killed in one of his battles, and to have returned to life. There are modern Christians, so-called, who think the resurrection of Christ unimportant; but not so then. The belief was universal, and was accounted vital. Celsus ridicules Christians for believing on so slender an evidence as that of

The belief of the Church in the first century.

The belief universal and vital.

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The admission of Celsus as to the belief.

an excited woman; but he allows the uniformity of the belief. Nor did it grow up by degrees, but was as strong from the first, as we see among other proofs, from the observance of the "Lord's Day." This is mentioned in Rev. i. 10, as already in use in Asia Minor; and this writing is carried up by the most extreme critics of our time to a date before the fall of Jerusalem, and regarded by many of them who accept so little as apostolic, as the work of the Apostle John. Nothing but belief in a fact behind it—a fact which to their own mind they had sufficiently verified, could have led Jew and Gentile thus to break away from their old calendar, and put first in the new, a once despised and rejected name. It was on this "stated" day (*die stato*), as Pliny tells us, that the Christians met to sing hymns to Christ as God; and that, as Justin Martyr, about the middle of the second century, assures us, they dedicated the once pagan day of the sun as a memorial alike of the old and new creation. But it is needless to enlarge on this universal, immediate, unbroken, monumentally-confirmed testimony. The whole New Testament, besides what is specially devoted to express testimonies, is here a voucher of belief; for hardly a book of it but contains some distinct reference to the faith of Christians in this fundamental fact of Christianity.

Belief proved by observance of the Lord's Day.

A fact behind the belief.

The whole New Testament a voucher of belief

When we pass beyond this widest circle, in-

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cluding all Christian men, we come to a much narrower, made up of Christian writers, who attest the result of their enquiries, or their own actual knowledge in regard to the fact of the Resurrection. Those who state the results of enquiries are the two Evangelists, Mark and Luke; those who have been generally believed to have been eye-witnesses are the Evangelists, Matthew and John; while the Apostle Paul stands between the two classes, not originally a witness of the resurrection scenes, but having later intercourse with the risen Jesus. In examining this various testimony we have in arguing with others to leave out of account the inspiration of the writers as Christians believe in it, and consider only their capacities as recorders and witnesses of fact; and we have in the same way to accept the best conclusions, on ordinary historical grounds, as to the genuineness and antiquity of the four Gospels and the writings of Paul, which bear on this subject.

Testimony of Christian writers.

Mark and Luke.

Matthew and John.

Paul.

Inspiration not assumed.

The questions of a critical nature as to date and authorship which arise, have naturally occupied much attention; but the results may be very briefly stated. The fundamental passage of Paul in 1 Cor. xv. is uncontested by the most extreme criticism. In like manner, the hasty allegations of Baur and Strauss as to a very late date of Mark and Luke, have been recalled, among others by Renan, who concedes that the Gospel of Mark

Results of critical studies.

1 Cor. 15.

Date and authorship of Mark and and Luke.

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is the work of the companion of Peter, and Luke that of the companion of Paul, who also writes the Acts. So also the whole of recent discussion is favourable to the genuineness of the Gospel of John. Sixty years ago Eichhorn, the leader of rationalist criticism in Germany, would not listen to any objections to the received view. Now, after a long and most earnest debate, the tendency—even of rationalism—is to return to the old position; while the highest names of the semi-rationalist school—Bleek and Ewald—have never countenanced this deviation; and more orthodox writers, like Beyschlag and Luthardt, have met it at every point—the aberration being all through in Britain and America wondered at, rather than followed. The Gospel of Matthew has also profited by recent criticism in Germany, which has floated it back to a much earlier date than was contended for by Strauss; and the old received opinion, that its author was an Apostle and an eye-witness, has not been essentially shaken, whatever difficulties may arise from the statements of early writers as to a separate Hebrew and Greek form of his Gospel, and the want of materials thoroughly to clear up this critical question. It may be added, that the case would not be vitally altered in regard to the Resurrection were the Gospel of Matthew—as all moderate rationalism admits—an ordinarily good historical record of the first century, and connected

Genuineness of John's Gospel.

The present tendency of rationalism.

Semi-rationalists.

Orthodox writers.

The date and authorship of St. Matthew's Gospel.

Admission of Rationalism.

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with the inner Christian circle, like the Gospels of Mark and Luke. Strauss, among others, uses Matthew as sufficiently trustworthy to found an estimate of the Saviour's life upon; and if unbelievers may use it historically for their purposes, why should its value cease in the hands of Christians?

Strauss treats St. Matthew's Gospel as historical.

What is now the bearing and worth of this mass of testimony? It is impossible to examine it in detail; but two main points, independent of each other, stand out,—the discovery on the morning of the third day that the tomb was empty, and the various appearances of Jesus to His disciples, by whom He was recognized. Paul vouches only for the appearances; but the evangelists also for the finding of the tomb empty. In regard to this latter point, the indications in Matthew and Mark are verified by the actual explorations in Luke and John; so that, if we attach any credit to these writers at all, the fact is proved. Nor did it need any special witness; for it was not in itself a miracle to find a tomb empty where a body had lain. But much more various, strong, and, as befitted the case, singular in their force as evidence, are the recorded appearances of the risen Saviour. There are appearances common to all the Gospels—that to Mary Magdalene, and if we grant the last verses of Mark xvi., that to all the Apostles, which is also affirmed by

The bearing of the testimony.

The empty tomb.

The appearances of the risen Saviour common to all the Gospels.

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The part played by women.

Doubt and fear in connection with the Resurrection.

Paul. There is in all the Gospels the similar part played by women. There is in all an original element of doubt and fear in connection with the fact of resurrection; and there starts up in all a most wonderful mental and spiritual likeness of the risen Saviour to His former self, as, for example, in Matthew and Mark (as supplemented), the apostolic commission,—in Luke, the discourse on the way to Emmaus,—in John, the scenes with Mary, with Thomas, and at the Sea of Galilee.

The process of conviction in the minds of the disciples visible.

We can thus see for ourselves the very process by which the disciples were convinced, and can judge of its reasonableness; for, convincing as the bodily marks were, the evidence of Resurrection lies even more in identity of soul than of body, and we can feel how unspeakably beyond invention were these incidents and utterances, while also so full of the past and so pregnant with the future.

Appearances recorded by separate writers.

The argument is rounded off by the appearances that are recorded by separate writers—one or more —as in Paul those to Peter and James, in Matthew to the women, and so of others.

An objection.

It has been made an objection that there is not room for all the appearances; but this has never been proved, and, on the contrary, in forty days there was opportunity, as the narrative bears, for more. And however difficult it may be to harmonize all the accounts, especially as to the first day, this, as has often been remarked, is the inevitable accom-

Difficulties.

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paniment of all narratives, however authentic, that travel over the same ground. It is wonderful how much has been done by scholars to show the compatibility of one part of the various records with the rest; and though this is probably an insoluble problem, it is striking how slight hints in one Gospel or in Paul are borne out in some other place. Thus, our Lord's appearance to Peter in 1 Cor. xv. is confirmed by the message in Mark to Peter; the race of Peter to the sepulchre in Luke is enlarged in the fourth Gospel into that of Peter and John; and the appearances in Galilee, of which there is not a word in Luke, re-appear in the last of the Gospels. Incidents like these go a long way to balance alleged discords, and show that we are on the track not of fabrication or license, but of real, though various, history.

Incidental mutual confirmation of testimony by the writers.

One great merit of this testimony is, that it is not carefully adjusted and dovetailed into a legal argument. Some critics have rashly wished for this, and have blamed the Gospels because they are not cast in the mould of a *procès verbal*, signed and counter-signed by witnesses and authorities. The Gospels were not written to prove a series of points, so much as artlessly to unfold the life, death, and victory of their great subject; and the delineation of character is more with them than the establishment of incident. But with all their disregard of legal dress and technical vouchers,

The Gospel narrative not a *procès verbal.*

The purpose and method of the Gospels

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how strong is the body of proof which these writers have piled up almost unconsciously into one of the clearest of moral demonstrations! Could the Apostle Paul have thrown out at random, when speaking with the solemnity of an oath, a set of impressions as to Christ's appearings, which he had rashly taken up,—even to the extent of asserting one made to more than five hundred persons at once, the most of whom are affirmed to be still, after a quarter of a century, alive, while others are known to be dead? De Wette could not resist this testimony, but says in his Commentary, "The testimony of the Apostle decides as to the certainty of the fact." But how many critics of inferior order have supposed that a writer like Paul, who was so entirely at home in every matter affecting what to him was the very centre of existence, could, when laying down the very articles of faith and hope, have been so ignorant or so careless as to have made the most circumstantial statements of fact without enquiry or foundation. Not less strong is Luke, who is admitted by Renan to have been the companion of Paul, and consequently with him, in Jerusalem and in Cæsarea, during his imprisonment of two years. How fresh must everything still have been, after the lapse of six or seven and twenty years, to an eager investigator, who doubtless met in Palestine with eye-witnesses of the Gospel history,

The strength of the proof.

De Wette's admission.

Renan's admission as to St. Luke.

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and who in his Gospel claims to have "traced the course of all things accurately from the first." (*Revised Version.*) Mark likewise, whose authorship is not questioned, belongs to the most select circle of the companions of the Apostles, the friend and fellow-labourer of Paul and Peter, the nephew of Barnabas, and more even than Luke mixed up with the rise of the new faith, as a Jerusalem Christian, and one whose personal recollections went back to the time of the ministry and death of Jesus. Still stronger is the testimony of the fourth Gospel, as the work of an eye-witness, of a leading Apostle, and of our Lord's most intimate human friend. The deniers of the supernatural were bound sooner or later to have disputed this work: for it does not seem that their position can possibly endure its uncontested authority. But now that they have made the utmost effort in this direction, and failed, the evidence of the resurrection comes forth all the clearer from one to whom the face and form of his Master were the most cherished of remembrances, who had been at the bottom of His empty grave, and who was fitted as none other to catch and to perpetuate the spiritual features, as well as the bodily, which re-appeared, brightened but not altered by the victory over death. The testimony of Matthew—another eye-witness, and from the more Judaic side of Christian teaching—confirms the record;

Mark's authorship unquestioned.

His relation to the Apostles.

The Gospel of John.

Its uncontested authority unendurable to deniers of the supernatural.

Matthew's testimony.

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and it is worthy of notice, in reply to those who have sought by an alleged fundamental discord in doctrine, to invalidate the evidence for the resurrection and other Gospel facts, how the fact of the resurrection is as necessary to the first Gospel as to the fourth, leading in as it does the fullest statement of the Trinity, taking up the lessons of the Baptism and the Transfiguration, and harmonizing with itself utterances ever-recurring, as in Matt. xi. 25–30, of a grandeur and sublimity not distinguishable from those of the last of the evangelists.

The resurrection as necessary to Matthew as to John.

Let it be added, that we have not only in the existence of these written testimonies, but also in their reception and public use from the beginning in the Christian Church (which is something distinct from the universal belief in the resurrection), a powerful argument. The Gospels were used as soon as they existed. For this we have the testimony of Justin Martyr in his first Apology (chap. lxvii.); and all that has been said to shake this position, leaves their alleged coming into use between their origin and his day, which after all was in much less than a century, wholly unexplained. It was thus not a mere generality as to the resurrection that the Church took up, but particular narratives full, circumstantial, and capable at every point of contradiction or verification. No history has ever received such an

The immediate acceptance of the Gospels by the Church.

Justin Martyr.

The account of the resurrection believed in its integrity.

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adhesion, for the original witnesses and converts were but a handful; and every accession of new converts carried with it a guarantee never equalled for sincerity and conviction, and that on the part of men thoroughly competent to enquire for themselves.

This brings us to the *second* point necessary to be urged, in addition to the separate weight of the testimonies: viz., how far the admission of the resurrection accounts for other undeniable facts of the history. Amongst these, two stand out pre-eminent as rationally accounted for by the fact of the resurrection. The one is the change of mind produced on the disciples; and the other is the impression made on the world by the Christianity which began immediately to be proclaimed. The first of these facts is incontestable. We know indeed only from the Scripture narrative itself of the extreme depression of the Apostles, and of the joy and confidence which succeeded. But nothing was so natural as the shock given them by the crucifixion; and nothing was ever more naturally described. How then did this give place? Nothing so completely accounts for it as the great event which came between, and the operation of this is in the Gospels a beautiful mental study. It has been asked, indeed, why the Apostles were not more cheerful if Christ had promised to return. But the mistake as to the meaning of His death rather

The change of mind produced on the disciples by the resurrection.

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overwhelmed them with disappointment than allowed hope to revive, and a new and joyful fact was the only thing that could work a change. There is a profundity, as well as a simplicity, in this part of the Gospel history which has always been admired; and when the resurrection is denied, the change to hopefulness sinks into mere weakness and enthusiasm. Dr. Baur, the leader of the Tübingen school, never missed the mark more than when he said, that it is of no consequence how the Apostles came by the belief of the resurrection: for the mere belief would anyhow do the same work. This is to build the world upon delusion, and to make groundless fancy as a moral force equal to the natural, steady, and effectual action of truth.

Only a fact could work the change.

Baur's mistake.

Still more impressive is the harmony between the resurrection, taken as a reality, and the start it gave the infant and apparently defeated Christian cause. Lessing was so struck with this, that in spite of all the difficulties which he found in the resurrection story as now before us, he felt that truth lay at the bottom of what so prevailed. The Church becomes the aggressor, and the world yields. It is lamentable, if, in such a case, humanity could not hold its own against mental weakness. Strauss has bitterly complained of belief in the resurrection as the "humbug of history." But the unreasonableness of belief in

The impulse to the Christian cause from the resurrection.

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it as not a fact, is the exact measure of the reasonableness of belief in it as a fact, which could not be gainsaid. It is the test of its suitableness to solve the history. It explains the helplessness of the adverse party, the paralysis which hindered every effort at confutation or exposure as by the production of the Saviour's body, and the depression which shut up the Jewish opposition to silence or to unreasoning violence. It also accounts for such wild rumours as that the disciples had stolen the body. This has been charged home as a Christian slander on the Jewish authorities. But the Christians had no motive to invent such a calumny, which evidently comes from the other camp. And it must be remembered that much as this report has been scouted by recent unbelief, so scouted that it has been utterly denied to have had a place in the thoughts of the Jewish rulers, it was, though a weak invention, such a one as men fall upon when perplexed and baffled; and so late as last century, the truth of it was made by Woolston the basis of his attack on the credibility of the resurrection.

The resurrection explains all the facts of the history.

Having thus shown the sufficiency of the great fact of the resurrection to clear the field of history all round, it only remains to touch on our *third* point, viz., the discord with history which the denial of the resurrection introduces. So far as this is the opposite of what has been already

The discord produced by denial of the resurrection.

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urged, it has been virtually considered. But there is more than a blank; there is a positive collision, when the denier of the resurrection goes on to give some positive theory of how the alleged resurrection originated, and seeks on the ground of that theory to explain the facts of the case. A rapid review then of negative theories of the Resurrection will close this paper.

The supposition of fraud falsifies the narrative.

The weakest of all the theories is that which traces up the current belief in the resurrection to fraud and imposture on the part of Christ's disciples. This is one of the controversies which the Christian Church has outlived; and though it survived from Celsus down to the Wolfenbüttel fragmentist of last century, there is no school of unbelief that would now give it, even as an alternative, a place on its record. This theory will suit nothing, not even the disappearance of the body. The narrative has to be falsified by the denial that the tomb was sealed and guarded; and the courage and daring of the Apostles has to be unhistorically exalted. The moral contradiction is still more outrageous. The greatest of moralists leaves his disciples capable of this infamy; and his influence, in spite of this scandal, through these impure instruments immediately begins to elevate the world.

Abandoned by unbelief.

A moral contradiction.

Equally incredible, though not quite so monstrous, is the theory that Christ did not really die, but only swooned on the cross, and that He

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emerged from the grave and showed Himself alive to His disciples. This so far attempts, like the first theory, to account for the empty tomb, but goes beyond it in explaining also the supposed appearances. But it really violates the history at every point. It violates the history of the crucifixion, for our Lord received a special wound to make sure of His death; it violates the history of the burial; for even, if recovered from a swoon, He could have found no means of extrication; and it violates the history of the appearances of resurrection, for Christ could not have thus suddenly recovered, and His disciples never suppose Him a returned survivor of the last penalty, but always one actually risen. This scheme disagrees with the character of Christ's enemies, who would not have done their work so slackly, of His friends, who could not have made such a mistake, or received such an impulse from a mere natural return; and most of all, of Christ Himself, who could not have so acted as to have suffered such a delusion to arise as that His case was one of resurrection, and must have come out of His hiding-place to have exposed it. This theory is only worthy of the naturalism of a Paulus; and though the genius of Schleiermacher has unhappily condescended to it, it is one of those eccentricities which do not even set a fashion, but after a day's wonder pass away.

The swoon theory incredible, and contradicts history.

It violates the crucifixion.

It violates the history of the appearances.

Inconsistent with the character of Christ's enemies, friends, and of Christ Himself.

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The vision theory.

The only theory that is now seriously and widely held is what is called the vision theory, or that Christ's disciples, through the influence of love or faith, or some other principle distinct from wilful error, were led mistakenly to believe that their Master had returned from the dead, and propagated the accounts of these mere visions, as actual re-

Strauss and Renan.

appearances. This is the view set forth by Strauss and Renan in their well-known works, though Renan inconsistently adds on to this the theory of fraud, and supposes it conceivable that Mary Magdalene and the other women had something to

Their differences.

do with the transfer of the body. These writers further differ, Strauss in supposing that the appearances, due to the action of imaginative love and longing, only began in Galilee, and that the disciples after a long interval returned to Jerusalem to start the report and found the Christian Church; whereas Renan makes all begin immediately in

The Christian position attested by them.

Jerusalem. Each of these writers in setting aside the other, attests the strength of the Christian position; for if all began in Jerusalem and began at once, by the appearances immediately happening, and being appealed to there, Strauss seems to feel that the resurrection must be a fact; while Renan probably realizes the difficulty of contradicting the evangelists here as to place and time, and yet founding anything anywhere on their testimony. As it is, the difficulties of Strauss, who is here the

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better advocate of unbelief of the two, are immense. He has not only to create in Galilee, amid disappointment and defeat, and with no prophecy of resurrection, a mood of mind that made belief in resurrection easy; but when the disciples return to Jerusalem, the appearances of the risen Christ are to be vouchsafed to meetings of any size, and after a long silence, to help them in reviving an unwelcome and fading memory; while thus excited and even fanatical, the Jewish Christians are to be so lofty and earnest in spirit as to shake the scepticism of Paul, and pre-dispose him to a similar vision and testimony; yet these visions of the Risen One are suddenly to end, and without them Christianity is to prevail in regions where neither risen Christ nor unrisen had ever been heard of or expected. If the resurrection demands faith it cannot be said that this theory, which is perhaps the best that can be offered, dispenses with it; and we see how little it fills up the gap in the fact that Baur prefers to leave the whole subject of the resurrection of Christ a mystery, and Keim, though otherwise disposed to leave out miracle, is prepared to grant its ingress here a last possibility, and to conceive that the glorified spirit of Jesus so acted on His disciples that they confounded it with His material presence. Against these visionary schemes the clear testimonies of the evangelists and of Paul maintain their place.

The difficulties of Strauss.

The demand Strauss' theory makes on faith.

Keim's position.

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St. Paul's vision of Christ.

Attempts have been made to shake the authority of Paul by urging that his own vision of Christ, which he connects with the rest, was only inward.

But this is supported by nothing in his other references to this memorable event which in Acts affects to blindness his bodily sense; nor can we without license understand a visionary appearance extended to five hundred witnesses, or by any fairness of interpretation introduce this into an argument for the literal resurrection of the body, the very turning-point of which lies in Christ's resurrection being itself real and literal.

The historical necessity of Christ's resurrection.

We are here then, towards the end of the nineteenth century, as unprovided with any deliverance from the historical necessity of accepting the resurrection of Christ, and other Gospel miracles, as in the first century; and the whole process of criticism and philosophy has simply been to show that if the supernatural is cognisable and provable, it is here manifested and proved.

The acceptance of the other miracles follows from the acceptance of the resurrection.

No one can admit, or has ever admitted, the resurrection-miracle, without granting the others in the Gospel history. The Apostle who was most prominent in the succession, in words not contested by the most extreme criticism, claims to have wrought miracles in his own person, and claims this as what belonged to other Apostles. "Truly the signs of an Apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs and wonders, and mighty

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deeds."[1] The miraculous element in the Old Testament will not be contested by those who admit it in connection with Christianity, or who allow a single prophecy of Christ, or indeed any revelation before His advent. Thus, where resistance is overcome at one point, it yields throughout; and though it is a quite lawful question whether some particular occurrences are held forth in Scripture as miraculous in character, the general reign of miracle is established.

The miraculous element in the Old Testament cannot be contested by those who admit it in the New.

The Christian Church, indeed, is far from saying that the mere historic belief in the resurrection of Jesus Christ, or in other miracles, will of itself make any man a Christian, for he must add to this —or rather have added by a higher grace—a discernment of the Divine greatness of Christ as a Saviour from sin by His sacrifice, and a reliance upon this and the other provisions of the Christian remedy, which are all connected with Christ's death and resurrection. Nor is it held by the Christian Church that the argument from miracles is the only avenue by which the presence of God in support of Christianity may reveal itself, and lead up to that higher faith in which the more historical belief that is thus variously strengthened has its true and saving consummation. At the same time, it must be held that if the Christian scheme be not founded on fact, and attested by

Something more than mere historical belief needed to make a Christian.

The argument from miracles not the only way to the higher faith.

[1] 2 Corinthians xii. 12.

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historic evidence, its saving applications and influences must be cut off, and rendered through any other channel impossible; so that while the historic proof of Christianity does not make Christian faith, its historic disproof would unmake it. It is in this deep and important sense that the argument for miracles is contended for in this tract, and, as the writer rejoices to believe, by an ever-growing host of earnest apologists; and it is his prayer that however the cause must ever transcend the best powers of the advocate, it may not be contended for in vain.

Historic disproof would unmake Christianity.

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IS THE

EVOLUTION OF CHRISTIANITY

FROM

MERE NATURAL SOURCES CREDIBLE?

BY THE

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"Christianity and Miracles at the Present Day," etc., etc.

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Argument of the Tract.

THE main sources to which evolutionary speculation traces Christianity are examined, and it is shown that it cannot be derived from Greek philosophy, because the resemblances between Christianity and Platonism are found chiefly in that which is not peculiar to Christianity; that they, taken as a whole, amount only to the theistic and ethical pre-suppositions of Christianity; because the distinctive doctrines of Christianity are not to be found in Platonism,—the Incarnation has no place in it,—the Atonement is not foreshadowed in it,—the doctrine of grace, especially in regeneration, has no forecast in it,—there is no Holy Spirit, and so no provision for the new birth as the beginning of the kingdom of God in it; nor does Platonism contain any foresight of the life and work of such a Saviour as enters into the substance of Christianity.

It is further shown that Christianity cannot be derived in a merely human and natural way from the whole of Jewish literature, including the Old Testament, the Apocrypha, and the Talmud, taken together as a mere human formation. The system of Strauss is examined, as the most celebrated discussion of this question in recent controversy.

Its inadequacy is shown, because the scheme credited by Strauss is not Christianity in the proper sense. The Christ of Strauss is incongruous—a defective moral teacher, with a sense of failure and shortcoming toward God, yet capable of aspiring to do the work of a Messiah. Strauss's theory of Christianity subsequent to the point at which Christ left it is proved to be artificial, inadequate, and inconsistent.

It is shown also that Christianity cannot be derived from the Hellenic Judaism of Alexandria, of which Philo is taken as the representative; because the doctrine of the Messiah in the teaching of Philo bears no proportion to its place in the Old Testament; because the doctrine of Atonement is almost wholly lacking; because Philo's doctrine of the Logos in relation to God is wavering and uncertain, and the relation of the Logos to redemption is very scantily set forth by Philo.

The hopelessness of the failure of the most plausible naturalistic theories of the origin of Christianity, and the unique and impregnable position of Christianity is pointed out.

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IS THE EVOLUTION OF CHRISTIANITY FROM MERE NATURAL SOURCES CREDIBLE?

BELIEF in Evolution as a principle of natural science has recently made rapid progress, and has been supposed to be capable of solving the greatest physical difficulties. Its range has hardly yet been made so extensive in the spiritual world; and it is rather in the adventurous way in which old problems are dealt with, than in any absolute novelty of method, that any change is visible. It has always been felt to be necessary to give some plausible account of the origin of Christianity short of its divinity. The genesis of systems is a part of history; and if history by the application of its ordinary methods cannot explain this religion, as it does all others, on mere natural principles, it must recognise a miracle. Has this task then, on the anti-supernatural side, been accomplished? If so, out of what pre-existing materials did Christianity by a natural process of development arise? This is the subject of the present Tract, which takes up an inquiry at this day exciting more attention than ever before, and

Progress of the principle of Evolution.

The genesis of systems part of history.

Has Christianity been accounted for by evolution?

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gives reasons for holding that Christianity cannot be explained by any natural development.

The various schemes of derivation.

In discussing the subject we shall refer to the various schemes of derivation; and then, on the ordinary principles of historical criticism, seek to test their sufficiency.

Greek philosophy.

The main fountain-heads then to which speculations of this kind have endeavoured to trace up Christianity have been Greek philosophy, especially

Pre-existing Jewish theology and morality.

that of Plato; pre-existing Jewish theology and morality, especially the so-called Messianic prophecies of the Jewish faith; and the combination of Greek and Jewish elements found in Alexandrine

Philonism.

thought, especially as reflected in Philo. It will be to a brief examination of these sources and tendencies of belief and opinion, in the light of a possible derivation of Christianity from them, that this inquiry will be directed. We shall endeavour, without unfaithfulness to the conditions of strict inquiry, and also of intelligible exposition, to convey the results in a brief sketch.

Christianity not derived from Greek Philosophy.

Alleged derivation from Greek philosophy.

I. Can we find then as the result of our *first* alleged origin, that Christianity can be historically derived from Greek philosophy, and as the question can hardly be proposed in regard to any other

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system, specially from that of Plato (B.C. 429–347)? This is anything but a new suggestion. In point of fact, in the first recorded encounter of Greek unbelief with Christianity, the Λόγος Αληθής ("True Word") of Celsus, preserved and replied to by Origen, and written near the end of the second century, the assertion is made and supported by instances, that Christianity is drawn from Platonism. It is not wonderful that Celsus, who understood Christianity very ill, supports this argument but feebly, and that Origen has no difficulty in replying to him, in his sixth book, where this discussion occurs. Thus, for example, among other things Celsus argues that Christ took his celebrated saying, "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God," from the utterance of Plato in the fifth book of his Laws, "That for one who is very good also to be very rich is impossible." To which Origen answers, that the point of the remark is greatly weakened in Plato by the absence of the camel, and also that it does not belong to so strict a system as that which laid stress generally on the strait gate and the narrow way. We learn also from this work of Origen that reprisals had already been made on the Platonic philosophy by Christian writers, who traced it back to Hebrew sources, which Plato is supposed to have studied in Egypt; and while Origen, who does not dissent from this

The assertion of Celsus.

The reply of Origen.

Reprisals of Christian writers who traced Platonic philosophy to Hebrew sources.

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view, does not practically apply it, we find that it had been attempted at some length before him in a hortatory treatise addressed to the Gentiles (*Cohortatio ad Gentiles*), which has often passed under the name of Justin Martyr, and in which Plato is charged with borrowing his distinction between Being that *is* only and never *becomes* from the name of Jehovah, "I AM THAT I AM," and also with deriving his "ideas" from the pattern showed to Moses in the mount.

Plato's distinction between Being that is and never becomes, said to be borrowed from Moses.

As the summing up of this discussion, in the early period of Christianity, we may mention the elaborate effort of the Church Historian Eusebius, in his great work entitled *The Gospel Preparation*, —the fullest dissertation on the relations of Christianity to Paganism and philosophy which has come down from antiquity, and written in the first quarter of the fourth century,—in which three books, X. XI. and XII., are devoted to the proof of the derivation of the Greek philosophy, and specially that of Plato from the Hebrew Scriptures. Here, however, as in the case of the so-called Justin, the plea for Plato's dependence is carried too far. Resemblance is not derivation, unless it be so striking as to necessitate the idea, and unless there be some reasonable hypothesis of contact. Now modern scholars are slow to admit any contact between Plato and Hebrew thought in Egypt. The whole scheme therefore stands or falls with re-

Eusebius derives Platonism from the Hebrew Scriptures.

Resemblance not necessarily derivation.

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semblance; and the question between those who with Celsus deduce the Christian faith from Plato, and those who with the early Fathers reverse the process, is just this, Is the resemblance so close as to make the idea of derivation probable, or even irresistible? Something is to be said for and against either view; but it does not follow that either system must be derived from the other. Modern opinion, on the side alike of Christian and non-Christian thought, is against the derivation of Plato. Must it now be held, that we have to go back to Celsus, and accept the evolution from Plato of Christianity? A brief statement of the balance, not merely as it appeared in those early days, but as it suggests itself now, after the conflicts and reactions of centuries, will assist in this decision.

Modern opinion is against the derivation of Plato.

(1.) First, then, it must be said, that *the resemblance between Christianity and Platonism is mostly found in that which is not peculiar to Christianity, viz., natural religion and morality.* Interpreters of all schools are in the main agreed, that in Plato, taking his undoubted works as a whole, the supremacy and unity of God are taught, though with accommodations to polytheism; that His natural attributes stand high; and that His moral attributes of righteousness, and even of benignity, have greater prominence than in any other philosophical system. Further, that while creation in the proper sense is hardly asserted, and there is a dark background

Resemblances between Christianity and Platonism not in the distinctive features of Christianity.

Creation hardly asserted by Plato.

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A real beginning and effectual Providence recognised by Plato.

out of which evil may arise, there is a real beginning of existing things due to the highest will and power, and followed by an effectual Providence which is moral in its character, and secures an administration of rewards and punishments, true in this life and perfect in the life to come. The

The Platonic doctrine of man.

Platonic doctrine of man is, that he is in his rational part an image of God and eternal, but through the mystery of union with the body, brought under the conditions of time and sense, so that the contemplation and imitation of the Divine goodness and beauty by love and assimilation are interrupted; but that this still remains the highest good and duty, and may by the struggle of philosophy, embracing all virtues, and aided by death, which is the return to native immortality, be attained. This is a rude outline, as all students

Platonism could never have produced Christianity.

of Plato will acknowledge. But it brings out the fact that this, so far as it goes, could never have created Christianity. Even some of the articles enumerated, such as sin and immortality, have

At most it is only the theistic and ethical pre-supposition of Christianity.

another than Christian setting. But the whole taken together, even granting that it was accurately reproduced in Christianity, is only the theistic and ethical pre-supposition of the Christian religion. It is no more a theory of the development of Christianity out of Platonism, than it is of the development of any other form of monotheism. Nay, Mahommed could with far more ease have got all

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he wanted in Plato, than the alleged human authors of Christianity.

(2.) *Every attempt to find the distinctive doctrines of Christianity in Platonism is a failure.* The doctrine of the Trinity has been most urged; but the resemblance is faint and vanishing. The Platonic Logos has no approach to the personality of the Fourth Gospel. It is only in the Epistles of Plato now generally rejected, that a distinction between a second and a third in relation to Deity is found, or that the word "Father," in possible contrast to "Son" (which last word is not found), occurs.[1] The Neo-Platonic writers, long after Christianity appeared, give a different version of Plato; but their interpretations are not supported by the text, and even their own Trinity is different from the Christian. The fundamental Christian doctrine of the Incarnation, so stupendously inwrought in the New Testament with the Trinity, has no place in Plato; nor could it, consistently with his depreciation of matter. It has never been seriously maintained that the doctrine of Atonement is foreshadowed in Plato; and Archer Butler has pointed to this blank, which he finds also in those Christian theologians who have been most influenced by him.

The distinctive doctrines of Christianity not in Plato.

The Platonic Logos not personal.

The Incarnation has no place in Plato.

The Atonement not foreshadowed in Plato.

"They abound with noble thoughts nobly expressed, but they are all marked with the characteristic defect of Platonized

[1] Archer Butler's *History of Ancient Philosophy*, II. p. 38. Note by the late Professor Thompson, of Cambridge.

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Christianity,—a forgetfulness, or inadequate commemoration of the most tremendous proof this part of the universe has ever been permitted to witness of the reality of the divine hatred for sin—the fact of the Christian Atonement." [1]

Grace and regeneration not anticipated by Plato.

It is to be added, that the great Christian doctrine of Grace, especially in Regeneration, has no true forecast in Plato. On the human side, there is a change, an awakening, a recovery, and even as in the case of Socrates, something like a divine revelation and help. But as there is no objective redemption in the depth of the Christian sense, and as there is no Holy Spirit, so there is no provision, and could be none, for the new birth as the beginning of the kingdom of heaven; and while it cannot be said that there is quite so great a blank as in regard to the Atonement, for there is everywhere a pathetic sense of necessity and an occasional flash of anticipation, this great regenerator of society relies mainly on personal effort and re-organizations connected with moral education.

The Resurrection not only unknown to, but excluded from, Platonic idealism.

The only other doctrinal difference that needs to be noticed is that bearing on the Resurrection; for as even the immortality of the soul does not rest to Christian faith on an eternal pre-existence of any part of the spirit, so its doctrine of the resurrection of the body, which in connection with that of Christ animates it throughout, is, in the Platonic idealism, not only unknown but excluded.

These irreducible differences are all indefinitely

[1] *History of Ancient Philosophy*, II. p. 308.

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increased in their bearing on the problem of a possible derivation of Christianity from Platonism, by the absence of anything in Platonism, corresponding to the life of a Divine Man, or Saviour, or any foresight of the work of such a person, such as enter into the very substance of Christianity. No doubt there are one or two "unconscious prophecies," which, if we grant the common interpretation of Plato, especially in regard to the fate of the perfectly righteous man to be rejected and even crucified (*De Republica*, Book II.) are very remarkable. But even ranking these at the highest, they could never have proved the germ of the Gospel history; nor, without some large anticipation of this, could Platonism have given birth to Christianity. We shall see immediately what can be made of Jewish prophecy in conjunction with it or in addition to it. But those who go on to bring in this, as all must do, really give up the case in regard to Plato; nor is it necessary to raise other difficulties as to how Christ, or other authors of Christianity, treated here from a merely human point of view, could have become acquainted with Plato, or received from his writings the impulse which is required. When they had learned all they were little more than at the beginning of their work, which was to create Christianity, distinctively considered, so far as Greek philosophy was concerned, out of nothing.

Platonism knows nothing of a Divine man or Saviour.

Plato's remarkable references to the fate of the perfectly righteous man could never have given birth to Christianity.

Not necessary to consider whether Christ or other authors of Christianity could have become acquainted with Plato.

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Christianity not derived from pre-existing Jewish Interpretations of the Messianic Prophecies.

II. The second alleged source of derivation is the pre-existing Jewish thought, especially as found in Jewish interpretations of the Messianic prophecies of the Old Testament.

The alleged derivation of Christianity, in a merely natural way, from Jewish literature as a whole, viewed as a mere human formation.

This might be put in a still wider form, that the whole of Jewish literature, including the Old Testament, the Apocrypha, and other materials, afterwards called Talmudic, taken together, *as a mere human formation*, in the days of Christ and His apostles, *in a merely human and natural way*, originated Christianity. This, no doubt, would be the fullest ground for the discussion of the question.

The discussion confined to alleged Jewish anticipations of a Messiah.

But it is evidently too large to be treated here, and therefore I limit myself to alleged Jewish anticipations of a Messiah; for nothing is so vital, so likely to have originated Christianity on natural principles as this; and there will be few, if any, who, if satisfied that this is insufficient, will fall back on any residual virtue in the Old Testament, or anything that had already gathered round it in Jewish religious history. There is also the great advantage in this limitation, that this ground has been taken definitely in the most celebrated discussion of the question in recent controversy—the *Leben Jesu* (the Life of Jesus) of Strauss in its

This ground has been taken by Strauss in his *Leben Jesu*.

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different forms, who concentrates his effort to deduce Christianity without the supernatural, on the influence of so-called Jewish interpretations of Old Testament prophecy on the mind of Jesus and His followers. If this scheme can be shown to be inadequate, and anything farther which, in moral and (equally natural) mental working, they may be supposed to have added to it, the question as to the human origin of Christianity must be answered in the negative.

Strauss's views of the life and teaching of Jesus.

Strauss, as is well known, grants a tolerably ascertained body of fact and opinion, making up the historical life and teaching of Jesus. He was, according to Strauss, a wonderfully gifted Teacher and Organizer, not yet surpassed in the history of the world, but essentially a Moralist, who apprehended as never before the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. His teaching lies in the Sermon on the Mount and similar utterances, which fall entirely short of a claim to divinity, though He claimed to be the Jewish Messiah, and expected to survive death and come in the clouds of heaven. While Strauss grants that He foretold His crucifixion, he does not allow that He foretold His resurrection, and regards all His anticipations as to a reign after death as due to enthusiasm. He holds also that Jesus spiritualized the Jewish idea of the Messiah as it stood in His days, and on the basis of it hoped to found a

Strauss denies that Jesus foretold His resurrection.

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Strauss's admissions as to the source of Christ's view of His own death.

universal religion for Jews and Gentiles; and he even admits that He may have derived from the Old Testament prophecies, a view of His own death as an atonement for sin, and in this sense (though the fact is not certain) instituted the Lord's supper.

Such is the view of Strauss regarding the Christianity which Jesus Himself held, and which was afterwards added to by His followers. Can it be said then, either *first*, that we find here a natural origin of Christianity at the point where Christ Himself left it, or *secondly*, that we find such an origin when Christianity comes to be developed from this point by His disciples? Each of these questions must be answered unhesitatingly in the negative.

A natural origin of Christianity cannot be found either at the point where Christ left it or from the point at which His disciples developed it.

The scheme of Strauss is not Christianity.

First, it must be said, without granting that the Old Testament was human to begin with, *that the religious scheme with which Christ is credited by Strauss is not in the proper sense Christianity.* If it be not Christianity that is originated, the whole labour of Strauss falls to the ground. It may be readily enough granted, that it was not in the nature of things impossible for Jesus, as Strauss conceives Him, to have risen up a great moral Teacher, and to have found much nourishment for His moral and religious sensibilities in the Old Testament. It may also be granted that such a Teacher would be likely to enter with peculiar depth into the Old Testament doctrine of a Messiah, and would spiri-

What may be admitted.

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tualize that conception and hope, in such a way as to take it entirely out of the region of mere temporal conquest and influence. It may be even by a stretch credible, that a great and profoundly reverent spirit might regard this Messiah as needing to suffer and atone for sin: for this was undoubtedly in the text of the prophecies—no matter how it came there—and a faithful student, even in a dark, carnal, and self-righteous age, might recover his hold over the original. But where we are compelled to part company with Strauss, is where he supposes it possible that a mere man so great and pure, approaching faultless excellence, yet not reaching it, such as he conceives Jesus to have been, could have believed *Himself* to be that wonderful Messiah, or held language as to His approaching sacrifice, or instituted any memorial of it. This is to do the work of Christianity without a Christian instrument: for Christianity does not need any kind of so-called Messiah,—it cannot proceed even with a sinless one,—who is not Divine, and as Strauss has planted no consciousness of the Divine in Jesus, drawn from the Old Testament, but even denied his sinlessness, and seen in his disclaimer of the good in Himself[1] the confession of an "unremoved discord"[2] between Himself and God, it cannot be said that there is here any real passage from the Old Testament to Christianity.

The Christ of Strauss incredible.

Christianity cannot dispense with a Divine Saviour.

[1] Mark x. 18. [2] Bruch.

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The incongruity of the Christ of Strauss.

The Christ of Strauss is thus quite incongruous—not only a defective teacher (however great) as he admits, but a personality with a sense of failure and shortcoming toward God, yet capable of aspiring to the work of a Messiah and of becoming the Christ of all ages.[1] Such a position at once falls. No suggestion from the Old Testament, or possible prophecies that may have inspired, instead of rebuking, such a career, can be regarded.

The arbitrary way in which Strauss makes the Old Testament act on the mind of Jesus.

It may be added here, that it is remarkable in how arbitrary a way Strauss makes the Old Testament act on the mind of Jesus, so as to determine on the one hand His actual, on the other His mythical history. According to Strauss Jesus knows all the prophecies respecting a forerunner to the Messiah, and yet has no relations with John the Baptist, to whom He owes no more than to the Essenes. He knows all that seems to be spoken of the Messiah as the Son of David, yet never lays claim to that title and discourages the use of it. He is acquainted with the long-standing prophetic tradition as to the Messiah riding into Jerusalem; but Strauss supposes it more likely that Jesus took in this part of His expected work as the Messiah no special interest, and that the narrative may be due to the colouring of the evangelists. And once more, prophecy moves Jesus to expect and to announce His own death to His disciples,

[1] *Leben Jesu*, 1864, p. 202.

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in terms of the 53rd of Isaiah; but though that oracle or the 16th Psalm might have suggested a resurrection, not one word of this was breathed to them. It may be said that in these and other cases, it was the dread of the supernatural that kept Strauss back: for had he freely granted that Jesus in all these cases fulfilled the Old Testament idea, or Himself prophesied, it would have compelled him to acknowledge miracle. Yet on the other hand, Strauss undoubtedly grants what looks very like fulfilment of prophecy in the death of Jesus; so that his result is made all the more incoherent by his own concessions, and is not so much a deduction of Christianity in the actual life of Jesus, as a fanciful application and rejection of the Old Testament in the genesis of that life by turns.

The deterrent effect of the dread of the supernatural on Strauss.

Strauss's concessions make his result incoherent.

Secondly, it must be added, that *the theory by which Strauss supplements Christianity as derived, beyond the point where Christ left it, is not more tenable.* His work is to bridge over the gap where he confessedly leaves Christ, with a simpler and purer Christianity, till the Gospels were written, and Christianity with them was corrupted, about the middle of the second century. He still holds by his main source, and in reply to the objection, that even this is too short a time for the transformation of histories into anything, he says that

The theory whereby Strauss supplements Christianity as left by Christ untenable.

"They did not rise first in this age, but their first foundation was already before and after the Babylonian exile; the trans-

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ference of all this, with its dogmatic modification, went on all through the centuries till Jesus; and the time from the gathering of the first Church till the rise of the Gospels, was the period of the application of the mostly already formed Messianic legends to him." [1]

The briefest criticism is all that can be allowed to this scheme of the transformation of Christ's life and doctrine by His followers into what is now Christianity.

The artificiality of Strauss's process.

(1.) It may be remarked, first, that the process is very *artificial.* So long as Strauss is criticising the supernatural features and apparent contradictions of the Gospels, his arguments have some plausibility; but the moment he becomes a system-builder of myths, everything becomes strained, and often dull. Among the myths of the Infancy are, according to him, that the Messiah was to be the Son of David; hence, Strauss holds, that the disciples acted on by their mistaken readings of prophecy, and all through, in the face of history, taught the literal descent of Jesus from David, His birth in Bethlehem, and His baptism by John, like David's anointing by Samuel. So the Messiah was to be the Son of God, and thus the way is opened for the miraculous conception, for the "Wisdom" of God in Jesus, like that in Proverbs, for the blending of Greek philosophy as to "sons of God" with Hebrew, and for the Divine predicates in Paul's Epistles in Hebrews, and in the

The teaching of the disciples according to Strauss.

[1] First *Leben Jesu,* 1835, p. 113.

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Gospel of John—in all of which, however, it is to be said there is very little derivation by Strauss from the Old Testament. A very contorted part of the process is the parallel between Jesus and Moses, like whom He has to escape danger in His youth,—as like him and Samuel, to be early awake to His destiny; and then the parallel is closed, not between Jesus and Moses, but between Him and the people, who did not overcome, but fell in the wilderness. The public life follows the infancy, bringing up other mythical parallels with the prophets, in having disciples, in healing, feeding, restoring to life, though many of the works of Jesus have no parallel, and are accompanied by discourses quite peculiar. Strauss labours hard to find something like the cursing of the fig-tree, and the transfiguration as modelled after the shining face of Moses. The scenes in the last sufferings and death have little parallelism with older history, and are founded, he says, on oracles misapplied, and scattered utterances made to converge, such as "Smite the Shepherd;" "A bone of Him shall not be broken." The Resurrection and Ascension, equally helped, pass, at the hands of the disciples, into the Gospel narrative, and colour Christian doctrine.

The parallel between Jesus and Moses.

The cursing of the barren fig-tree.

The narrative of the sufferings and death.

(2.) A second and still more fatal objection to the mythical scheme is that it is *wholly inadequate.* If our Lord's disciples were not more advanced in their views of the personal greatness of Jesus than

The inadequacy of the mythical scheme.

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Strauss supposes them to have been, how could they emerge from the terrible catastrophe of His crucifixion? The vision hypothesis of the Resurrection held by Strauss is not sufficient. They not only had to recover their faith in Him as the Messiah. They had to rise to the view of His Deity. They had to develop the germ of a doctrine of Atonement found in His teaching, from which the narrative represents them as before estranged. They had to connect this doctrine of Atonement with His Deity, and to make this the centre of Christianity, turning the cross which was the shame into the glory of the new system. There is no room left for such a transformation in their hands, bowed down as they were with grief and disappointment. There is every evidence that these doctrines constituted their first preaching. The Apostle Paul is almost immediately in the field with written testimonies, whose genuineness is unquestioned, and every effort to disconnect him from their Christianity is a failure, since Strauss himself describes the Apostle as converted by and in sympathy with the first Church. How then could Jesus, so much smaller than the Apostles made Him, nothing more, according to Strauss, than a great moralist, with no miracle, prophecy, or ray of true divinity, so dazzle these fishermen of Galilee? How could He turn them by the magic of His influence into the great theologians

The insufficiency of the vision hypothesis

What the disciples had to do.

Their first preaching.

St. Paul's conversion.

How could the Christ of Strauss have so transformed the disciples?

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and reformers of the world—the creators even of Himself, as He has been commonly believed in—and enable them in a few brief days and weeks when left without Him, to bring out of the whole Old Testament what they had never found in it before, the transcendent and glorified image of His eternal greatness, condescension, love, and victory? This is the radical difficulty in the heart of the mythical theory; and the common view which brings the same Christ out of it from the beginning alike to Jesus and His disciples, but with Him both fulfilling and interpreting it as a Divine book, and leading the way, has here by every argument the stamp of nature and of reality.

The difficulty in the heart of the mythical theory insoluble.

(3.) Thirdly, this scheme of Strauss as to the mythical derivation and exaggeration of Christianity is *inconsistent.* Why does Jesus, who so fascinates His disciples, and leads them to see in every Old Testament nook and cranny some reflection of His greatness, leave His impress so shadowy that it can be moulded, if not into the opposite, into the immense disfigurement of Himself? Why is Christ, the grandest of teachers, the least able to regulate His own followers, so that they disport themselves on His grave, and celebrate ere long for the Man of Nazareth the *alter ego* of the divinity? Strauss affirms that had Jesus returned to the earth, He would not by the time of the fall of Jerusalem have recognized His own

Strauss's scheme inconsistent.

Christ, according to Strauss, at once fascinates His disciples and fails to regulate them.

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image. How could such a vacillating faith have ever conquered the world, when it could not hold its own first disciples? It has been said that diseases of the lungs could be healed if the organ could only find rest. But here is a Christianity smitten from the first with this disease of change, yet working on and serving all the functions of respiration even better when transmuted by His disciples than in the days of Christ Himself.

Strauss's consciousness of the weakness of his own scheme.

Strauss feels here the weakness of his own scheme, and hence his bitterness against the Christian world, which has preferred to accept a risen and Divine, rather than a naturalistic, Christ.

His final abandonment of both Christianity and Theism.

And hence, too, his ultimate despair of religion altogether, in his *Old and New Faith*, in which every reading, not only of Christianity, but of Theism, the mythical theory included, is abandoned, and the course of the world wrapped up in a succession of catastrophes without any continuous history.

Christianity not derived from Alexandrian Hellenic Judaism.

Philonism as a possible source of Christianity.

III. We come to the third and last alleged source of Christianity in the way of natural development, the mixture of Hellenic and Jewish thought found in Alexandria, and especially in the writings of Philo. In this Tract Philo may be con-

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sidered alone; for if the connexion is disproved in regard to him it can be maintained in regard to no other. Now in regard to Philo, it may be said that he is a high and noble figure in the history of human thought; that there is in him a true Hebrew side, which far beyond Plato secures approximation to and coincidences with Christianity, and that there is even one doctrine of his creed, which to a degree without any parallel elsewhere seems to ally him with distinctive Christianity—his doctrine of the Logos. But it must not less be contended that Philo is, when all has been considered, a quite inadmissible origin of Christianity; and the present writer, after a careful reading of his works and some study of what has been written by others, is more than ever convinced of the hopelessness of the scheme of those, who, like Bolingbroke and Voltaire in last century, and like Strauss and Zeller, with far superior learning in our own, have held that there is a real and vital connexion between not only Platonic thought generally, but also Philonism and Christianity. In farther discussing this interesting question, it may be a suitable method to examine *first*, the approximations of Philo to Christianity, other than those alleged in regard to the Logos. Then, *secondly*, to set forth the confessed or little doubted divergencies; and then, *thirdly*, in the light of these extremes, so to speak,

Philo's Hebrew side.

His doctrine of the Logos connects him with Christianity.

The connexion between Philonism and Christianity not vital.

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and of its own meaning, to estimate the so-called Logos doctrine in its possible fitness to have suggested or originated Christianity.

Approximations of Philo to Christianity.

1. There fall then first to be considered the *approximations of Philo to Christianity.* These are often under-estimated by writers of the very school who suppose the influence of Philo to have been greatest. They love to think of him as little better than a Greek and as a reflection more or less pale of Greek civilization and philosophy.

His nationality

But in point of fact his national feeling is deep and ineradicable. As the philosophical Jew in Germany is not a German, neither was Philo in Alexandria a Greek. No doubt Greek culture had done much from the days of Alexander the Great to those of Philo—whose period was 20 B.C.–54 A.D.—to transform externally and superficially the mind of the Jew of the dispersion; but in his deepest heart he was still a child of Abraham, and the Old Testament was more to him than all philosophy. We see with what keenness Philo enters into the quarrels of the Alexandrine mob and the Jews, with what satisfaction he depicts the remorse of the tyrannic proconsul Flaccus, with what patriotic sympathy he enters upon his embassy to Caligula (A.D. 39) to obtain the removal of the idol from the temple at Jerusalem. Rationalistic critics fail to see this leading feature. Neander—himself a Jew—has seized it, and

His patriotic sympathy with the Jews.

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shown that with all his singular interpretations, Philo was yet a true child of the Old Testament, and therefore had a place in preparing for the New.

Philo a child of the Old Testament

This approach to Christianity lies, *first*, in the *genuine supernaturalism of Philo's teaching*. He accepts quite literally the fact of the Deluge, the appearance of angels to Abraham, the fasting of Moses forty days and nights; and he admits prophecy as well as miracle, such as the pre-announcement of the destruction of Pharaoh in the Red Sea, of the descent of the manna, and of the death of Korah and his company.[1] He quite understands the peculiarity of Judaism as based upon a revelation; and his doctrine of inspiration would now be regarded as even rigorous.

He accepts the supernatural.

He understands Judaism to be based on a revelation.

It has been justly said that his excessive allegorizing is in one sense due to this idea of the origin of Judaism; for as the literal sense seems to him often inadmissible, he has recourse to the most violent and mystical interpretations in order to preserve his reverence for what he regarded as an incomparably deep and divine book. The most of his writings are indeed commentaries on the Pentateuch, written with as profound belief in the text, as that of Origen, whom in his allegorizings he so much resembles; and when, as in his *Life of Moses*, it is otherwise, the same devotion to that great prophet is apparent, whom he exalts above every

His allegorizing due to his doctrine of inspiration.

His devotion to Moses.

[1] *De Vita Mosis*, III. § 34–38.

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law-giver or philosopher of mere human authority, and supposes to have been so fully inspired, that in the end of this work he declares him to have predicted and recorded in Deuteronomy his own death and burial by supernatural means. Nor can I admit with Professor Schürer, in his article on Philo, in the current edition of the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, that this recognition of Mosaic authority is merely formal, and that Philo accepts the laws of Moses because they seem to him inwardly reasonable and cosmopolitan, and thus to agree with the universal religion and morality which had been so far reached by Greek philosophers. This is not consistent with his condemnations and denunciations of the Pagan world, including the philosophers. Nor is it consistent with Professor Schürer's own acknowledgment:

His recognition of Moses not formal only.

> "Above all, his whole works prove on every page that he felt himself to be thoroughly a man, and desired to be nothing else. Jewish 'philosophy' is to him the true and highest wisdom; the knowledge of God and of things divine and human, which is contained in the Mosaic Scriptures is to him the deepest and the purest."

Philo's doctrine of Theism.

The approach of Philo to Christianity may be said to lie, *secondly*, in a *purer doctrine of Theism*. This cannot be said save in contrast with philosophy, for there are points where Philo is distinctly below the Old Testament. Thus the doctrine of creation is less pronounced in his commentaries than in the original; and he has allowed

Creation.

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himself to borrow from Plato or some other source, a certain dark background of negation, from which evil may be derived, and not from God. This is also true in regard to his high metaphysical view of God as the τὸ ὄν (the Being that truly is), whose nature is ideal unity, incompatible with any human apprehension of his separate attributes. But this is only a transient speculation, which has too much re-appeared even in schools of Christian theology, and does not darken the general clearness of his reflexion of the Old Testament view of the Divine character. It is indeed a grand and lofty representation which Philo on the whole gives; and nothing like it is to be found in Plato, or any of the philosophers. The strictness of monotheism is preserved inviolate, and the folly, blasphemy, and degradation of idolatry are everywhere brought home. The high attributes of eternity, immensity, and immutability are maintained. If the power of God is theoretically limited in regard to creation, it is practically asserted, and also in harmony with wisdom in regard to both creation and providence. The reign of moral government, on the side both of justice and benignity is upheld, and with conspicuous ability defended. The God of Philo is also a Father who pities His children, who helps their infirmities and forgives their iniquities, who hears their prayers, and who makes their return to

Origin of evil.

His view of God.

Strictness of his monotheism.

Moral government.

The Fatherhood of God.

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The personality of God.

and enjoyment of Himself their chief good. The personality of God is thus as truly vindicated in Philo, as in the Old Testament. Any one can judge how much this means, who is acquainted at this point with the downfall of the Greek and especially of the Stoical philosophy. Even Plato has been charged, probably unjustly, with a shade of Pantheism; but in Philo no such trace appears.

Philo's doctrine of practical piety and virtue.

Defect in his system.

The *third* and last point to be noticed in Philo's approaches to Christianity lies *in his earnest doctrine of practical piety and virtue.* There is no doubt one grievous defect in his system, which he so far shares with Plato, his false doctrine of the relation of evil to the body, darkening and confusing his whole scheme of the blessed life, and of recovery to it. He cannot justly be charged with holding an eternal pre-existence of the soul, or an indefinite series of transmigrations. And practically the pre-existence of the soul does not mean much more with him than that it comes direct from God and is united to a different element. But in his view of this different element of sense, as related to temptation, as affecting duty, and as making him cold and silent in regard to the resurrection of the body, there is only too large an infusion of non-Christian thought. Still, practically his better side, which is in harmony with the Old Testament, here predominates, and makes him a true and earnest teacher, not only of natural virtue, but of

His better side, which is in harmony with the Old Testament, predominates.

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recovery to God by repentance and faith on the basis of God's own revelation and covenant. His beautiful work on the Decalogue sets up a high standard of duty, whereby through the law there may come the knowledge of sin. As his doctrine of sense is connected with free-will, and does not make the subjection of the soul to the body necessary, there is room for a large and wide and often graphic exposure of all the cheats and delusions by which the soul is separated from God. The reality of the fall is thus brought home, with the need of what, though it may not be called by that name, is really a spiritual birth. "Repentance" (τὸ μετανοεῖν) is enforced in a tract under that name; and in connexion with this and with return to God, the two adjectives are applied to the penitent, which correspond, though vaguely to the Christian ideas of justification (θεοφιλής) and sanctification (φιλόθεος). Faith also is urged; and the same Pauline text[1] is quoted as the highest encomium of Abraham; nay in the close of the same treatise on Abraham, there is a eulogy of faith (though far inferior) in the strain of the Epistle to the Hebrews. Nor is the doctrine of Divine grace and influence wanting, although in definite connexion with a personal Spirit, it is still almost below the horizon. These facts are to be noticed in Philo, because rationalistic writers, seeing no difference

His standard of duty.

His doctrine of sense.

The reality of the fall and the need of repentance.

Faith required

The doctrine of Divine grace.

[1] Gen. xv. 6; Rom. iv. 3.

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Rationalists have generally overlooked Philo's approximations to Christianity.

between regeneration and natural virtue, have generally overlooked them, and have ranked this writer more as a heathen moralist than as an Old Testament believer, often mistaken, but earnest and sincere—and thus already on the road to Christianity.

Philo's divergencies from the Old Testament.

2. But now, *secondly*, in justice to our argument as to derivation or non-derivation, we have to take Philo on the opposite side, and see how far he has gone back even from the Old Testament, as a foreshadowing of Christianity. It will hardly be denied that here in some unaccountable, but yet only too visible a movement, we have a recession of the tide, and find ourselves in the shallows. This affects two points of Philo's doctrine; but these of the gravest import—his view of the Messiah and his view of Sacrifice. If he is here out of harmony even with the Old Testament, how can he be the creator, direct or indirect, of Christianity?

The doctrine of the Messiah much in the shade in Philo.

(1.) Let us begin with his *Doctrine of the Messiah*. This is comparatively easy to ascertain, and need not occupy us long. All must admit that this doctrine is in Philo from first to last singularly in the shade, and bears no proportion to its place in the Old Testament. There is no mention of the Messiah in the way of reference to any parts of the Old Testament beyond the books of Moses. There is no allusion to the references to Him in

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Genesis, as *e.g.*, to the seed of the woman,[1] or to the seed of Abraham,[2] save only in the handling of the latter text, in the vaguest way, or to the Shiloh.[3] The only Messianic passages distinctly referred to are two, one in Numbers[4] where a King is spoken of "higher than Agag," and afterwards as "a star out of Jacob." The passage comes in near the end of the tract of Philo, on "Rewards and Punishments," where the promise of help to Israel in war, and of help so effectual as in the latter day to secure its abolition, is considered.

Two Messianic passages only distinctly referred to by Philo

"For a man shall come, says the oracle (Numbers xxiv. 7), leading and making war, and shall subdue great and populous nations, God sending to His saints the fitting help. This is the invincible courage of souls, and most vigorous strength of bodies, each of which is formidable to enemies, and where they are combined, perfectly irresistible."[5]

"Higher than Agag—" "Star out of Jacob."

The only other reference is to Deut. xviii. 15—22 (there is, however, no quotation), where Philo, at the end of his first Book on the Theocracy, thus speaks of the promise of Moses:—

"He says that, if they are truly pious, they shall not want knowledge of the future: but a certain prophet suddenly appearing, and divinely inspired, shall foretell and prophecy to them, saying nothing of His own, for then He shall not be able to receive it as one truly possessed and in a state of enthusiasm; but what He utters he shall repeat as from the suggestion of

The prophet like unto Moses.

[1] Gen. iii. 15. [2] Gen. xxii. 16. [3] Gen. xlix. 10.

[4] Numbers xxiv. 7, or perhaps 17.

[5] *De Praemiis*, II. 424. Mangey's Edition. For all translations from the Greek or Latin, the writer is responsible.

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another; for the prophets are the interpreters of God, who uses them as instruments for the disclosure of His will."[1]

How small a part the doctrine of the Messiah as such had in the theology of Philo is evident when these are all the specific references to such a King and Prophet in his voluminous works. It is true, indeed, that there are hopes connected in the Prophets, with a general Messianic period, which Philo accepts and embodies. These are almost entirely limited to two passages. The one is founded upon Isaiah xi., where he accepts as literal the transformation of the venomous and destructive creatures, and as connected with it the cessation of war among men.[2] The other passage is a reminiscence of Deut. xxx., where Philo describes the sudden change in Israel's fortunes, and their return from their last captivity, emancipated by their conquerors, who are astonished at the conversion which they have experienced:—

Hopes connected with a Messianic period accepted by Philo.

Transformation of venomous creatures and cessation of war.

The change in Israel's fortunes.

"When they have obtained this unlooked for deliverance, who shortly before were scattered in Greece and among the Barbarians over islands and continents, rising with one impulse, they march from all different sides to the one region that has been revealed to them, guided by a higher than mortal vision, unshared by others, and disclosed only to the rescued themselves."[3]

No call of the Gentiles in Philo.

Grand, however, as these passages are, there is not in Philo any proper call of the Gentiles, even

[1] *De Monarchia*, II. 222. Mangey.

[2] *De Praemiis*, II., 422.

[3] *De Exsecrationibus*, II., 436.

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in a Messianic age. It is the Jews who return, and who continue and perpetuate for ever, as he elsewhere tells us, those Jewish sacrifices in Jerusalem, which are already, according to him, offered for all the world. No doubt, proselytism must be included in his conceptions; but he dwells little on it, and thus the result of the Messiah's work is feeble and unimpressive in his scanty references, in comparison with the majestic pictures of the Psalms and Prophets with which he must have been familiar.

Proselytism included in his conceptions; but he dwells little on it.

(2.) More adverse, however, to the hypothesis of derivation, than this slender and even stunted form of the doctrine in Philo of the Messiah, is the almost entire want in him of the distinctively Christian doctrine of *atonement* or *sacrifice*. It is not even easy to reconcile this with full Judaism; but it seems impossible to reconcile it with the giving of a large impulse to Christianity.

The distinctively Christian doctrine of atonement almost entirely wanting in Philo's writings.

It cannot be said that Philo lacks the sense of the evil of sin. He looks on human nature as truly fallen; and some of his pictures recall the first chapter of the Epistle to the Romans. There must be a discovery of disease and an earnest flight from it, not without Divine help. By the use of a very powerful figure, he describes the supreme importance of this by supposing a physician to enter a great house or palace, and regardless of the splendour of the building, the attendants, the fur-

Human nature viewed by him as fallen.

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niture, and of the carved bed on which the patient lies, to care only for the beating of his pulse, and the special remedies which he requires.[1] But unhappily Philo looks too much on sin as disease, and too little as a violation of law demanding expiation. Hence the great remedy for sin which he everywhere urges and exalts is repentance, as when he says, "Repentance is the younger brother of innocence."[2] It is then hard for Philo to give any explanation of the Old Testament sacrifices. The idea of guilt being transferred and imputed has hardly a place in his theology; and in dealing with the burnt-offering, and the laying of the hands of the offerer upon it, he treats this rite, not as a confession of sin, but as a protestation of innocence:—

Sin regarded as disease rather than as violation of law by Philo.

The transfer and imputation of guilt has hardly any place in his theology.

> "These hands have not received any gift of unrighteousness, or fruit of violence and covetousness, nor have they touched innocent blood."[3]

The burnt and peace offerings viewed by him as purely eucharistic.

No doubt Philo says this of the burnt-offering, which, with the peace-offering, he treats as purely eucharistic; but this explanation of the rite is contrary to Leviticus,[4] where the laying on of the hands is interpreted in the annual sin-offering, as the putting of the transgressions of Israel "on the head of the goat;" nor can Philo apply an emblem so significant, with a totally different

[1] *Fragment on Providence*, II., 638.

[2] Τὸ μετανοεῖν ἀδελφὸν νεώτερον ὂν τοῦ μηδ' ὅλως ἁμαρτεῖν. I. 634.

[3] *De Animal. Sacrific. idon.* II. 242. [4] Levit. xvi. 21.

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meaning, to alleged different sacrifices. When he comes to the sin-offering, he cannot get rid of the idea, that the pardon is in some way by the will of God dependent on the sacrifice; but he still falls back on the efficacy of repentance:

While regarding pardon as in some way dependent on the sacrifice, in treating the sin-offering he falls back on the efficacy of repentance.

"For somehow the penitent is saved, when he regards the disease of the soul as worse than the sufferings of the body" (II. 248).

There is no trace at all in Philo, that the blood of the victim atones, because, according to so many Jewish interpretations of Leviticus,[1] as the vehicle of life, it denotes the giving of one life for another. Nor is there any reaching forward to any typical idea of a higher sacrifice to come; for Philo expressly says:

No trace of atonement by blood in Philo.

"Victims slaughtered for the offence of the high priest or people, as already said, are not eaten, but wholly consumed by fire, *for there is no one better than the high priest or the people, who shall be a deprecator of sins.*"[2]

As Philo can see nothing expiatory in the victims, the symbolism of sacrifice becomes a mere set of moral lessons to the offerers, for, speaking of the unblemished nature of the animals, he says,

The symbolism of sacrifice a set of moral lessons to the offerers, according to him.

"He wishes to teach them by these emblems to bring no weakness or disease or passion in their own soul, but to keep it in everything perfectly pure, so as not to repel God, who sees the heart."[3]

He wanders still further away, even from the

[1] Levit. xvii. 11. [2] *De Animal. Sacrific. idon.* II. 249.
[3] *De Animal. Sacrific. idon.* II. 239.

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Philo connects the ritual of sacrifice with general cosmical relations.

moral view of the atonement, by connecting the ritual of sacrifice with general cosmical relations, so that every part of the High Priest's dress is allegorized, the robe in particular representing the three lower elements, the ephod, heaven, and the twelve names on the breast-plate, not the twelve tribes of Israel, but the twelve signs of the Zodiac.[1] It is not possible to see in such a symbolism anything but a great recession from the true meaning of the Old Testament; though Philo, with his wonderful power of holding both to the literal and the spiritual, no doubt strove in his own mind to combine both.

Philo's scheme could never originate or even suggest the New Testament view of atonement.

But it was not possible for such a scheme ever to originate, even by suggestion, the New Testament view of atonement, where everything bears so strictly on Christ as the true High Priest and as the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world. All schools of thought, worth any consideration, accept the Epistle to the Hebrews as from the first representing an integral and vital part of Christianity; and we have seen that even Jesus, according to Strauss, interpreted the 53rd of Isaiah in this sense, and thus sanctioned a view which, while including all that is true in the eucharistic and ethical views of Philo, goes unspeakably deeper to hold forth the giving of his life as a "ransom for many" (λύτρον ἀντὶ πολλῶν). Let it be added that, according to Philo

[1] *De Vita Mosis*, II. 154.

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the whole sacrificial system, including the Temple and its revenues, shall last for ever (ἐφ' ὅσον τὸ ἀνθρώπων γένος διαμενεῖ[1]) and we see another great discord between this scheme and the Christian view of the appearing of Christ, "once in the end of the world to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself."

Philo regards the sacrificial system, including the Temple and its revenues, as perpetual.

3. We come then, as our *third*, and not least important inquiry, to take up Philo in regard to his doctrine of the Logos, or Word of God, in which he has been represented as the most distinctively Christian, and as having said enough to originate that part of the doctrine of the New Testament which was ultimately moulded by Christian theology into the special article of the Second Person of the Godhead in the scheme of the Trinity and Incarnation. I do not think that this view can be supported by facts; but it is also possible, as has sometimes been done, to underrate the coincidences of Philo with the New Testament, and the degree to which, beyond any Jewish writer, he had developed the hints and forecastings of Old Testament teaching on this head. Still, it cannot be held with any fairness that Philo has anticipated the New Testament ideas; and this will appear when the two leading facts are considered, *first*, that he has a wavering doctrine of the personality of the Logos in relation

His doctrine of the Logos could not have originated the Christian doctrine of the Second Person of the Godhead.

Philo's doctrine of the personality of the Logos in relation to God wavering.

[1] *De Monarchia*, II. 224.

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to God; and *secondly*, that the Logos in his writings has a very scanty relation to redemption.

Philo's doctrine of the personality of the Logos radically different from the Christian.

(1.) *First*, then, *the doctrine of Philo as to the personality of the Logos in relation to God is wavering and uncertain*, and thus it radically differs from the Christian. The number of passages in all Philo where the Logos of God is spoken of in any sense (as I have counted them) is sixty-two; but there may be one or two more or less. Now the question arises, how far Philo meant by the Logos of God, a distinct personality, and how far a mere general name for God, under the aspect of the fountain of reason, or it may be sometimes of speech, without implying any personal distinction in the Godhead. The same difficulty, it is well known, arises in interpreting the earlier extra-Biblical Jewish literature, which in treating of the angel of God, or the wisdom of God (as in Gen. xlviii. 16, or Prov. viii. 22–31), came to use various traditional names, of which "*Word* of Jehovah" (Chaldee, *Memra*) stands nearest to the nomenclature of Philo. The language of Philo himself is so indistinct that it is not easy to classify his passages, but I have put down thirty-six as capable of being reconciled with the idea of abstraction or personification, or some other hypothesis, while only twenty-six seem, with any clearness, to speak of the Logos as distinct from God. I shall give one or two samples of the former, and dwell at

The indistinctness of Philo's language in most passages concerning the relation of the Logos to God.

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greater length upon the latter, as only upon them can an identification of Philonism with Christianity be attempted.

Passages in Philo which do not separate the Logos from God

Thus, in the very first passage that occurs in Philo's works, it means nothing when it is said that God used, as the pattern of all things that He arranged, His own Logos, and that the beauty of the universe is due to this reflexion.[1] So in other passages, as where it is said that the soul of man is "marked with the seal of God, of which the print is the everlasting Logos."[2] Nor does it separate the Logos from God when it is said that "He waters the virtues" as the river of paradise, that is parted into four heads;[3] nor when it is declared that "the Divine Logos equally divides the manna to all who use it.[4] There is also a class of statements where the Logos, seeming to be distinguished from the Father, is immediately identified with Him, as where it is said, "He is the Logos of the Eternal," but it is added that men

Passages which seem to distinguish but immediately identify the Logos with the Father.

"rejoicing in one race, and honouring one Father, the right Logos, lead a bright and cheerful life."[5]

The allegorising style of Philo.

So also in a style of evident allegorization, since God as Father, with knowledge as mother, produces the sensible universe, so the Logos as Father, with education as mother, begets four kinds of leaders

[1] *De Mundi Opif.* I. 33. [2] *De Plantatione Noe*, I. 333.
[3] *De Post. Caini*, I. 250. [4] *Quis Rerum Div. Heres*, I. 500.
[5] *De Confus. Ling.* I. 411.

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Samples of Philo's looseness in holding personal distinctions.

of men.[1] And to crown all, in this same strain, the Logos is mentioned as second in a series of powers, of which Being in general is the first; while creative power, with benignity, come in as the third and fourth; regal power, with legislative, as the fifth and sixth; and the seventh and last is the intelligible universe.[2] Such examples show us with how loose a hand Philo holds personal distinctions; and he even tells us that we may mistake a ray for the sun, as Hagar an angel for God, and that the apparent Trinity, as in Genesis xviii., in the visitants of Abraham, may be due to the weakness of vision, especially as the patriarch addressed them as One.

More distinctively Christian aspects of Philo's doctrine of the Logos.

But now it would be doing injustice to Philo to suppose that there was nothing that had a more Christian look in his Logos doctrine; and the other side, in which, in a less numerous set of passages, he endeavours to set forth a real distinctness between God and the Logos, and also the relation between them is now to be considered. Thus he speaks of the Logos as a second God, or "second to God;" "the most generic is God, and second the Logos of God."[3] And again he says on Gen. ix. 6, regarding man as made in the image of God;

"for nothing mortal could be formed after the likeness of the

[1] *De Ebrietate*, I. 362. [2] Armenian *In Exodum* (II. 515. Aucher).
[3] *Legis Allegor*, I. 82.

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Supreme Father of the universe, but after the norm of the second God, who is His Word."[1]

Passages in Philo in which the Logos is called God's Son.—On Zech. vi. 12, etc.

There are also four remarkable texts in which the Logos is called his Son. Thus on Zech. vi. 12, where the subject is the "Branch,"

"for this eldest Son the Father of the universe made to spring forth, whom He elsewhere called First-born; and He, when begotten, imitating the ways of the Father, looking to his archetypal patterns fashioned the species of things."[2]

Again, in the same book of Philo:

"Let Him strive to be adorned after His first-begotten Logos, the eldest angel, subsisting as a many-named archangel: for He is called beginning, and name of God, and Logos, and the model Man, and seeing Israel."[3]

Paraphrase of the 23rd Psalm.

Once more, in a striking paraphrase of the 23rd Psalm, which, however, is not applied to the Church, but to the universe, Philo thus speaks:

"Having set up His right Logos, His only begotten Son, who shall assume the charge of this sacred flock, as a certain deputy of a great King."[4]

The word "Son" used in his *Life of Moses.*

The last of these passages, where the word "Son" is expressly used, is in speaking in *The Life of Moses* of the work of the High Priest:

"For it was necessary that He who was consecrated to the Father of the universe, should make use, as a Paraclete, of a Son, most perfect in virtue, both for the amnesty of sins, and supply of most liberal blessings."[5]

Similar to this Christian-like idea of Sonship is

[1] *In Genesin* (II. 148. Aucher).

[2] *De Confus. Ling*, I. 415.

[3] *Ibid.* I. 427.

[4] *De Agricultura.* I. 308.

[5] *De Vita Mosis* (II.[156.)

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The Father said to be the "Fountain" of the Son.

another expression, destined often to recur afterwards in Christian theology, where the Father was said to be the "Fountain" of the Son. "God rules, who is the fountain of the eldest Logos."[1] Not on the same plane of elevation, but still remarkable are the passages which, in dealing with Old Testament texts, speak of the Logos as an angel. Thus in reference to angelic warning, as in the case of Balaam:[2]

The Logos spoken of as an angel.

"The Logos is the Divine Angel that leads us, and that takes obstacles out of our path."[3]

The Word regarded as Mediator.

And in connexion with the same idea, that of Mediator comes in:

"Of necessity the Word, which is called Angel, is constituted as it were Arbiter, and Mediator."[4]

The title Logos connected with moral operations, but more commonly in relation to creation and providence.

This title of the Logos is connected with moral operations; but a more common representation of His function as something intermediate, is in relation to creation and providence, as an instrument divinely used:

"The shadow of God is His Logos, using which as an instrument, He made the world."[5]

And again:

"The Logos is older than created things, on whom taking hold as on a helm the pilot of the universe steers all things, and when He fashioned the world He used this instrument, for the faultless subsistence of things then completed."[6]

[1] *Quod. Det. Potiori Insid*, I. 207. [2] Num. xxii. 31.
[3] *Quod. Deus Immut.*, I. 299. [4] *In Exodum* (II. 476. Aucher).
[5] *Legis Allegor.* I. 106. [6] *De Migratione Abrahami*, I. 437.

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When, however, we turn to other expressions mixed up with these utterances that seem almost to coincide with the Christian statement of the Trinity, we are painfully conscious of a great incoherence and indecision. In addition to the vague and shadowy distinctions already cited, that stop short of real personal difference, one or two testimonies may be produced that appear clearly to contradict the idea of equality. Thus:

Mixture of incoherent and indecisive utterances with more distinctly Trinitarian ones in Philo.

The idea of equality in the Trinity contradicted.

"Since it is necessary for the rational soul of men to bear the type of the Divine Word, since God the most rational nature is superior to the first Word, He who is superior to the Word, holds a place in a better and singular kind (*species*)." [1]

And again, still more expressly, speaking of Abraham seeing the place afar off,[2] and allegorizing "the place" as the Logos, he says:

Abraham seeing the place afar off allegorized.

"But there is an ambiguity of two different things, of which the one is the Divine Logos, the other the God who is before the Logos. He who is guided by wisdom comes to the former place, finding as the head and end of good pleasure the Divine Logos, in whom being, he has not yet come to the God who really is, but sees Him afar off; or rather is not able to see Him afar off; but that God is far from every creature, this only he sees: and that the conception of Him has been lodged very far from every human mind. Not even then allegorizing the place, has he laid hold of the Cause; but the meaning is this, he came to the place, and looking up with his eyes, he saw the 'very place' to which he had come, afar off from the unnameable, unspeakable, and, by every idea, incomprehensible God." [3]

It is impossible, I think, to conceive anything

[1] *In Genesin* (II. 148. Aucher) [2] Gen. xxii. 14.
[3] *De Somniis*, I. 631.

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less in harmony with the great Christian truth embodied in John i. 18:

> "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him."

The Father greater than the Son.

Christian theology, no doubt, in constructing its doctrine of the Trinity, has had to reckon with those texts of Scripture which speak of the Father as greater than the Son. But it has here had a doctrine of Incarnation as a medium of reconcilement, for which Philo had no room; and the very strongest of the utterances of any adherent of any of the creeds which allow for a priority of order in the Father in relation to the Son, preserve at the same time an equality of the Son to the Father, a necessary existence, and a capacity of fully revealing and communicating the Godhead, of which in Philo there is here the unhappy denial. His doctrine is at best a kind of wavering between a vague Sabellianism on the one hand, and a type of Arianism on the other, with a glimpse here and there of the Christian position, because inherited from the Old Testament. It may be a dim groping and longing which Christianity came to fulfil. But it could not be out of such materials that the grand, coherent, imperishable doctrine of the Trinity, built up not by human subtlety, but by sober induction out of the consenting texts of Scripture, could be formed.

The doctrine of the Incarnation, which has no place in Philo, reconciles the apparently conflicting statements of Scripture.

The wavering character of Philo's doctrine.

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(2.) It now remains, *secondly*, to show, *in how scanty a relation to redemption the Logos doctrine of Philo is set forth.* Of the sixty and more passages in which that doctrine is touched upon, there are not more than ten that can be said to bear upon the doctrine of men's recovery to God as sinners. In the New Testament we know it is entirely different; and how, whatever is said of the Logos as the Creator and Upholder of the universe, as the angel or interpreter of Divine counsels, and even as the image of God, is made to bear predominantly on Incarnation and Redemption. But here also, as everywhere, there is a better element in Philo, an element of truth that in its struggle to advance further is even pathetic. Thus there is a remarkable passage in which the Logos is spoken of as a convincer of sin, and thus as a healer of it:

Few of the passages on the Logos in Philo have any relation to redemption.

In the New Testament everything said of the Logos bears on Incarnation and Redemption.

Element of truth in Philo.

The Logos spoken of as a convincer of sin and a healer of it.

"Let us, therefore, who are convinced of our own offences, entreat God rather to correct us than to leave us alone. For leaving us alone, He will make us the servants, not of His merciful self, but of the unmerciful creation; whereas correcting us, mildly and gently, as a gracious Being, He will redress our sins, having sent forth His wise-making Reprover, His own Logos into the soul, by whom overawing and rebuking it for its excesses, He will heal it."[1]

As the work here ascribed to the Logos touches in a remarkable way that of the Holy Spirit in John xvi. 8, so it may be stated that the Divine Spirit (though without mention there of the

[1] *Quod Det. Potiori Insid.* I. 219.

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The Divine Spirit said to have been made to lodge in Abraham.

Logos) is said to have been made to lodge in Abraham—

"the Divine Spirit, which breathed from above dwelt in his soul, surrounding the body with singular beauty, and giving persuasion to the words." [1]

Official mediation inculcated repeatedly in Philo

Similar to these passages there is a general idea of what may be called, "official mediation" repeatedly inculcated. The following comes perhaps nearest to Christianity:

"The Father who begat the universe gave to the archangel and eldest Logos the choice gift, that standing as on a boundary he should separate the thing made from the Maker. He is the intercessor for the mortal that is always decaying with the incorruptible, and the ambassador for the ruler with the subject, and He rejoices in the gift, and exalts it, speaking thus, 'And I stand between the Lord and you' (Num. xvi. 48, where Philo's reading is peculiar), being neither unbegotten as God, nor begotten as we, but the middle of extremes, acting as a hostage with both, on the side of the Father of men, a pledge not at any time to wipe out and remove the whole race, thus leaving no world at all; and on the part of the offspring, a ground for the good hope of the merciful God never neglecting His own creature." [2]

The Incarnation approached, but shrunk back from, by Philo

This doctrine of mediation brings Philo near to Incarnation, but he shrinks back; for in a parallel passage, where the Logos is not mentioned, but he is speaking of the High Priest, to whom elsewhere the Logos is compared, he says,

His view of the High Priest to whom the Logos is compared by him.

"He comprises the whole race of men, or rather, to speak the truth, He is a certain nature, bordering on God, less than He, and better than men, for when the High Priest enters into the holiest, man shall not be there (Lev. xvi. 17). If he is not man, what is he then? Is he God? I should not say so (for the

[1] *De Nobilitate*, II. 443 [2] *Quis Rerum Div. Heres*, I. 502.

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inheritance of this name the chief Prophet Moses received when being in Egypt, he was called a God unto Pharaoh (Ex. vii. 1). Neither is he man; but one who touches both extremes, the foot and the head."[1]

The archetypal High Priest neither a real divinity nor a real humanity; hence the resemblance to the Christian mediatorship destroyed.

Thus it would seem to be neither a real divinity, nor a real humanity that belongs to the archetypal High Priest, nor through him to the Logos; and the resemblance of this mediatorship to the Christian is destroyed.

Some of the "benefits of redemption" connected with the Logos by Philo.

It is affecting to see how Philo, without any contact with the distinctively Christian view of Incarnation and Sacrifice as the means of procuring spiritual benefits, or what are called in Christian language, "benefits of redemption," still connects these or some of them with the Logos. Thus the Logos resembles Abraham interceding for Sodom.[2] Thus also He is the anti-type of the cities of refuge:

"Surely the oldest, and strongest, and best metropolis (I cannot say city merely) is the Divine Logos, to whom first it is of most advantage to flee . . . He exhorts him, therefore, who is able to run quickly, to make with breathless haste for the Supreme Divine Logos, who is the fountain of wisdom, that having drawn from its tide he may instead of death find as a prize, everlasting life."[3]

It is only necessary to recall how in a formerly quoted passage, the High Priest (without any explanation of the nature of sacrifice) in sacrificing to the Father, made use "as a Paraclete of His Son

[1] *De Somniis*, I. 683–4.

[2] *De Cong. Erud. Grat.* I. 535. [3] *De Profugis*, I. 560.

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Conformity to the Logos held forth as the highest gift of God.

most perfect in virtue, for the amnesty of sins, and the supply of most liberal blessings." And in one striking passage more, conformity to the Logos himself is held forth, as the highest gift of God.

"They shall obtain acceptance from the Saviour and merciful God, who has held out to the human race the best and greatest gift, affinity to His own Logos, from whom as from an archetype the human mind is derived."[1]

To sum up all in perhaps his most fervent and passionate utterance, like what might have been the language of St. Bernard, or any Christian mystic, he speaks of the Logos as,

"the cup-bearer and symposiarch of God, not differing from drink, but himself unmixed, the brightness, the sweetness, the effusion, the desire, the ambrosial medicine (for we must use poetic words) of joy and gladness."[2]

The influence of the doctrine of the Logos in the Book of Proverbs on Philo's mind and heart

Language like this may be sufficiently accounted for by the strong hold which the doctrine of the Logos in the Book of Proverbs, as the Fountain of all life and benediction, had taken upon the mind and heart of Philo; and while we cannot forgive, we blame less, his mistake as to the sacrificial system, and his silence as to great oracles like the 53rd of Isaiah.[3] But how any writer or

[1] *De Exsecrationibus*, II. 436. [2] *De Somniis*, I. 691.

[3] The writer has made no use of the passage, given in Aucher's translations from the Armenian (*In Exodum* Vol. II. 545), because this may be regarded, though Aucher has not said so, as in part at least, a Christian gloss. The gloss is here printed in Italics. "Verbum est sempiternum sempiterni Dei, caput universorum, sub quo pedum instar aut reliquorum quoque membrorum, subjectum jacet universus mundus, supra quem

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writers could develop these hints into distinctive Christianity; how they could seize on the incarnation, here so entirely neglected, and make it the key-stone of an arch, which otherwise has none; how they could pass from Philo's Logos, to Jesus Christ, and Him crucified; how they could for his bright but colourless fountain bring in a fountain filled with blood, and make this alike the hope of earth, and the joy and song of heaven; and how, once more, out of a scheme where the Son and Holy Ghost are confounded, they should build up a solid and effectual Trinity, where the Spirit is the final Paraclete and the living pulse of a new and world-wide society; this the theorists of Philonian development have failed to make even plausible, far less probable. And it will be found much harder to explain Philo himself as a struggle

The hints of Philo could never have been developed into distinctive Christianity.

The Philonian theorists have never made the development probable or even plausible.

transiens constanter stat. *Non quidem eo quod Christus dominus est, supra mundum transiens sedet—sedes enim ejus juxta suum patrem est deum—sed quia* necessarium est mundo ad perfectam plenitudinem pro cura habenda exactissimæ dispensationis, atque pro propria pietate omnis generis ipsius divini verbi; sicut et animantia opus habent capite, sine quo vivere non possunt." ("The eternal word of the eternal God is the head of the universe, under which, like feet or other members, the whole world lies subjected, and above which, in his passing to and fro, he constantly stands. *Not indeed because Christ is Lord, does he passing over the world sit, for his seat is beside God his Father, but because* this is necessary to the world in order to its perfect fulness in securing its most exact administration, and from due piety of every kind towards the Divine Word himself; as even the animals have need of a head, without which they cannot live.")

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of opposites, than out of any residual force of the right kind in him to give an origin to Christianity.

The writings of Philo throw no light on the prominence of suffering, weakness, and death, in the Gospels.

Let it be added, that as by the testimony of Strauss and others, the great difficulty now is to account for the prominence of suffering, weakness, and death in the biographies of Jesus in the New Testament, the writings of Philo are the last quarter to which the authors of these incomparable narratives could have fled for any light or help in the construction of them or their adaptation to Jewish pre-possessions, since his writings never raise the question of how the Divine can empty itself or pass through obscuration to more visible glory.

In the light of these internal difficulties the outward hindrances to any probable contact at any early enough date of Philo and his ideas, with founders and moulders of Christianity, may be passed over. Nor is it necessary to urge the objection that if the Logos doctrine of Philo had had a determining effect on Christianity, it is not easy to see how on ordinary laws of diffusion, it should not have influenced more, and coloured more, the entire New Testament. This tract does not exclude a tolerably early knowledge to studious men of Philo's special theory. It only denies that it could possibly—beyond what was in it of elsewhere accessible Old Testament truth—have created or controlled a wide-spread popular movement like Christianity.

Philo's theory could never have created or controlled a movement like Christianity.

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We thus seem to leave each of the most plausible theories of the human origin of Christianity behind us—a visible failure; and the sense of insufficiency is increased by the fact that no one failure at any point relieves the rest, or holds out the hope that under some happier auspices the evolution theory will achieve more, and fill up the gap that now lies between its premises and its conclusions. No one can say with any truth that progress has been made in this direction, that regions once assigned to special creation have been recovered to the realm of law, and that the towering grandeur and singularity of this one religion want only a few missing links to bind it on —humbled and captive—to the other religions and moralities of the world. None of these systems can in turn set up a claim to supernatural birth. The old classic Paganism does not thus resist the attempt to carry it up by nature-worship and apotheosis from some lower type, though even here the Christian must feel how much better it is explained as the degeneracy of an older revelation. Hinduism can be resolved into a great pantheistic development, half religion, half philosophy, with a multitude of polytheistic outgrowths, varying from epoch to epoch, and as a Christian believes, wrecks and survivals of the primeval monotheism. Buddhism too, admits of solution, as a reaction, on the same idealistic ground, from the pantheism of

The evolutionary theory of the origin of Christianity a visible failure.

The grandeur and singularity of Christianity unimpaired.

No other system can claim a supernatural birth.

Hinduism can be resolved into a great pantheistic development.

Buddhism admits of solution as a reaction from India's pantheism.

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India into a virtual Atheism, with many of the inconsistencies of a religion, as shown in its alliance with polytheism, and, as in Confucianism and ancient Stoicism, with a large development on the human side of ethical independence and elevation.

Zoroastrianism does not transcend the efforts of human reason.

The Zoroastrian belief will hardly be supposed to transcend the efforts of human reason, founded as it is upon an apparent dualism, which, however, reason cannot long endure, and which has more and more limited the scope of this now decayed system. When we turn to Mohammedanism, the natural evolutionist and the Christian will alike deny it anything of a proper Divine birth, since though fused in the soul of a great personality, who was able to convey his own enthusiasm to others, and to stamp it by means all too human upon the face of the world, it is a manifest conglomerate of Arabian tradition, Judaism and Christianity, the first lifted up to meet the two last in a reduced and abated shape, and without even the shadow of new ideas beyond them, such as its founder claimed in his character of the Paraclete whom Christ had promised; so that those who expect evolution to run in the line of chronology are here corrected, and may as soon make Mormonism, as it also professes to be, the last development both of the Old and New Testament.

Mohammedanism an agglomerate of Arabian tradition, Judaism and Christianity.

When from the obviously inferior level of these

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religions, and also from their historical failure, we return to the claims of Christianity, including Judaism, to be in the proper sense Divine, as originating and carrying through a grand scheme of redemption, culminating in the Incarnation and Atonement of the eternal Word of God, we find that we have recovered the clue to a true development of which that of mere rationalized philosophy or empty speculative theology is but a distorted image. We have gone back to the cradle of a once happy race, before redemption was needed, and can account for the traditions of a golden age. Out of these memories and the traces of early revelation, we can account for the remnants of truth both as bearing upon religion in general, and upon sacrificial and other monuments of a system of grace, that linger amidst the darkness of a fall. We trace the beginnings of prophecy, helped by the light of primitive sacrifice. The call of Abraham, like the record of the Deluge, discriminates a new start of covenant faith from the legends of idolatry. The Mosaic legislation follows, with its Decalogue, its growing Messianic hope, its grand ritual of propitiation, suited to the childhood of the world, but impossible to have grown up out of a mere nature-worship with its feasts and seasons. Theocracy consolidates the religion of a separate people; and prophecy, its necessary organ, with priesthood, at once guards the present by its moral office, and

Christianity gives the clue to the true development of which rationalised philosophy or empty speculative theology is a distorted image.

The memories of early revelation account for the remnants of truth that linger amid the darkness of a fall.

The beginnings of prophecy.

The call of Abraham.

The Mosaic legislation and Messianic hope.

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unveils the future, with a glow of hope from direct inspiration which disowns the parallel with heathen oracles. This system of preparation with its successive advances carries the Old Testament onward to its close; and all the while the defeats and captivities of the people are the victories of their religion and the means of its purification and diffusion. Everything is in harmony with the laws of a Divine revelation, where God necessarily must plan and order, and where, though the laws of history are still observed, the human element cannot be supreme. Hence there is enough of development to make man free and history possible, and enough of revelation and providence to save grace from failure, and history from barrenness. Thus the Jewish dispensation has its great vindication; and even the Gentile world, with the gropings of its superstition and the struggles of its philosophy, does not lie beyond the pale of this preparation for Christ. Plato comes in, but not as an originator of Christianity, or day-star compelling its dawn, but rather as an infant crying for it in the dark; and Philo, still more visibly, because in its own twilight, though with face half-averted from its rising beam. We have seen the failure of Strauss to construct out of its mistaken prophecies, the reality; but even its true prophecies could not have fulfilled themselves, partly from their own obscurity, and still more from their

The Old Testament carried on to its close.

God plans, yet the laws of history are observed.

The vindication of the Jewish dispensation.

The Gentile world not beyond the pale of preparation for Christ.

The fulfilment of prophecy dependent on the fulness of time.

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dependence on "the fulness of the time." When Christ came, as was proper to One who was the First and Last, He "finished the work and cut it short in righteousness;" and thus was condensed into so brief a life and ministry (a sign among others of its higher descent), a fulness of work, suffering, teaching and influence, which accomplished all the past and heralded all the future. The same law of development still has its place; yet not beyond Christ, but only to the manifestation of what is in Him; and this we see in the completion of the New Testament Canon, in the foundation and growth of the early Church, and in the perpetual expansion of Christianity. The presence of Christ by His Spirit in the Church necessitates progress, though amidst apparent decay, as the earth is being replenished and subdued, even amidst the sterner seasons; and there is in Christianity what no other religion has ever approached, a power of renovation, of reform in doctrine, of renewal in life, and of grand outbursts in social, political and world-wide influence, which connect it not with ordinary development, but with Divine history. Some faint shadow of this is found in human discovery, in the march of civilisation and in the revival of liberty, where the dropped thread of ages is taken up and the extinguished torch glows with its ancient fires. But this too, after all, is part of a plan, of which the

Christ finished the work.

The law of development in the completion of the New Testament Canon.

The presence of Christ in the Church necessitates progress.

The power of renovation in Christianity.

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The kingdom of Christ the abiding centre of a world-renewing plan.

kingdom of Christ is the one abiding and unshaken centre, which slowly and to us mysteriously is renewing all things with its own youth, and holding out to all institutions, as to all souls that are not incurably hostile to it, the promise of its own universal victory. It would be an imperfect recommendation of Christianity if we could only prove it Divine in its origin, and not also in its mighty fruits and possibilities as the very hope of the world. And let it be added, that it would also be an inadequate pleading for it which overlooked the urgency of claims and serious responsibilities which its underivable and sole greatness brings with it, and from the height of which its Divine Author could with such authority say:

Christianity not only Divine in its origin but in its fruits and possibilities as the hope of the world.

The claims and responsibilities that it brings with it.

"All things are delivered unto Me of My Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him."

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PRESENT STATE

OF THE

CHRISTIAN ARGUMENT FROM PROPHECY

BY

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Argument of the Tract.

THE conditions which must meet in any utterance or writing to warrant its being regarded as a prophecy are stated. While other great ends are served by prophetical teaching, the predictive element is shown to be the chief one apologetically.

The Messianic element in the Old Testament is traced from its earliest appearance down to the latest book; and it is shown that the Christian is justified in regarding the first promise as the prediction of a personal Saviour; that the promises to Abraham, the blessing of Judah by Jacob, the words of Balaam, the promise to Moses of the rise of a prophet like unto himself, can only be adequately interpreted by regarding them as referring to a personal Messiah. The rise of the Davidic kingdom, the relation of David's career and experiences to a great king and sufferer who was to descend from him, the Messianic references in the Psalms, and the frequent references to the Davidic descent of the Messiah in the various prophets down to Malachi are traced. The Davidic element in the prophecies is shown to be strengthened by the birth of Jesus at Bethlehem. The cycle of predictions bearing on Christ's life and ministry, and the wonderful ones relating to His death are noticed. The conflicting views of unbelieving critics and the concessions of Strauss on important points are exposed. The widespread expectation of the rise of a great kingdom in the East produced by the prophecies closes the first branch of the argument.

The prophecies relating to the Christian Church are then examined. The relation of Judaism to Christianity and the superiority of the latter are shown. The predicted spread and universal prevalence of Christianity when there was no likelihood of fulfilment, and the ideal of a universal religion in the prophecies, are inexplicable on any natural theory. Objections are anticipated and refuted by the prediction of failure, delay, reaction, and corruption.

The predictions of the captivities and dispersions of the Jews, the New Testament prophecies of the destruction of Jerusalem, and the predictions concerning the Arabs, Egypt, Nineveh, Babylon, and Tyre, are examined, and the conclusions are drawn that they have not the characteristics of confessedly human predictions, that ordinary explanations are inadequate, and that the Christian view accounts for all the facts.

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PRESENT STATE

OF THE

CHRISTIAN ARGUMENT FROM PROPHECY.

IT has been commonly and justly held that three conditions must meet in an utterance or writing to warrant its being regarded as a prophecy, or used as the seal of a revelation. First, *it must lie beyond human sagacity or conjecture.* A prophecy requires to be as truly supernatural as a miracle of power. If the death of Christ could by any natural means have been foretold in the days of David or Isaiah the notice would cease to be a prediction, being reduced to such an anticipation of the rejection of the Just One as occurs in the *Republic* of Plato; and on the same principle, the Bible threat of the downfall of Jerusalem would only rank with Macaulay's picture of the New Zealander amidst the ruins of London.

The conditions of true prophecy.

First condition.

Secondly, *the prophecy must precede the fulfilment.* It must not be history disguised as prophecy; and

Second condition.

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hence the Christian writer must meet the frequent allegations that the dates of Scripture books are placed too early, or that passages now look prophetic because they have received sharpening touches after the event.

Third condition.

The third condition of prophecy is, *that a real fulfilment has taken place.* The rationalist will grant in the Bible many bright anticipations of a golden age, which according to him have missed the mark. We must be prepared, therefore, to show in history definite and specific fulfilments. It is not necessary that the full accomplishment of a prophecy should be exhibited; for surely God may accomplish a great scheme, or even a part of it, gradually.

Uses of prophetic teaching.

It is a mistake, however, to treat prophecy as a purely evidential arrangement, or to lose sight of other great ends and uses served by prophetical teaching. There were all along, in the Jewish and Christian Church, men who, under the name of "prophets," or some kindred one, were the great teachers of the people, not only in regard to the future but in regard to the present, expounding and enforcing all spiritual truth and moral duty, and shining out with peculiar splendour as national guides in every field of religious thought and action.

The functions of prophets in the Jewish theocracy.

They were necessary to the system called the theocracy in all its parts; and it was in virtue of this general mission that they carried out in God's

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name plans and measures where the knowledge of the future was the very condition of the enterprise and of its success. As it was theirs to work this peculiar element into the frame of the divine government of Israel and of the scheme of redemption, they could not but derive from it special authority. Prophecy, considered as prediction, both lent to and borrowed from the mighty moral scheme into which it was introduced. It prepared the way and shaped the work of all divine heralds, including the last and greatest, as well as attested their claims. It filled men with the knowledge of coming events, and thus with interest and hope in regard to them; and thus it not only made development possible, but when this seemed to be defeated or delayed, it brightened the sky and revealed again its day-star in men's hearts. This broad and comprehensive view of prophecy, as embracing moral and religious leadership, with needful infallibility on other points, and, so to speak, constitutional recognition as thus endowed, must not be surrendered; but it is evident that as an argument for the gospel, we must mainly draw from its superhuman intimations of the future, and fix attention on the prophet as the organ of the omniscience of Him who "declares the end from the beginning."

The functions of prophecy.

The predictive element the chief one apologetically.

The predictive element in the religion of ancient Israel, which reappears in Christianity, though but another form of the supernatural, will be found

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Prediction completes and fortifies miracle.

to have a singular interest and value, as completing and fortifying what is commonly called miracle. One great objection to miracle urged by Hume and others entirely disappears. There is no longer here a dependence on testimony for events entirely past. If not the oracles, the fulfilments in multitudes of cases belong to our own time. Ordinary history makes good the announcement which is not by itself a miracle; and ordinary history or observation makes good the accomplishment, which must equally be a matter of fact; and all can judge whether the miracle is begotten between them. Besides, prophecy forms a chain even more than other miracle. Every part supports every other, binding also the doctrine together, as for example in type and antitype by its cohesion; and every fresh confirmation, even in the smallest point, supports the whole.

In this Tract I shall consider prophecy as it bears *first*, on the Messiah; *secondly*, on the Christian Church; *thirdly*, on the Jewish people; and *fourthly*, on the other nations of the world.

I.

Messianic prophecy.

With reference to the Messiah, we must mainly draw here from the Old Testament. It is indeed striking that the predictive element in regard to Him also reappears in the New, not only in the utterances of others regarding His future, but in

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His own. Still it is to the earlier utterances as farthest separated from the event, and woven most into a scheme, that attention has been most directed. It cannot be denied by any candid mind that these do not admit of any explanation in harmony with mere ordinary laws.

Its early appearance in the Old Testament.

In the earliest parts of the Old Testament, this mysterious element already appears. Jews and Christians have alike found such references in the writings generally ascribed to Moses. Nor do they disappear, if the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch be broken up, or its date, in whole or in part, carried as far down as any of the theories which have been started on the subject may demand. The most advanced theory still places the utterances centuries before the birth of Jesus of Nazareth. The development of prophecy may not in the more novel scheme be so visible; but prophecy, or what looks like it, remains.

The first Gospel.

This applies to what has been called the first Gospel, in Gen. iii. 15. It is possible so to allegorize the Temptation and Fall, as to bring out of this verse nothing more than that the human race, apparently for ever defeated, should still for ever overcome, and even by that very defeat and suffering. It is possible to see in the words only the announcement of a destructive conflict between men and serpents. But the ordinary Christian does not put any violence upon this language, when

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he regards it as foretelling a great and decisive deliverance for the race of man from the dark and evil power that had prevailed over it; nay, its terms support him when he goes further, and believes it to refer to a single Deliverer, who should be in a peculiar sense the Seed of the woman, and who should only crush his great antagonist by being himself bruised.

A personal deliverer foretold.

Everything in the context supports this deep interpretation of the oracle. We have on the one hand the exclusion of the race from the tree of life; and on the other, the name, expressive of returning hope, given to the woman, Havah—the Living. We have the origin of sacrifice, and the fulfilment of a strife between the seed of the woman and of the serpent, in the Cainite and Sethite races begun, with the nursing of hope in the latter through the translation of Enoch and the birth of Noah. The deluge follows, confirmed so much by the Chaldean discoveries, but still more by the moral grandeur of the Bible record, with its entire exclusion of idolatry, its clear doctrine of judgment tempered by mercy, and its ratification of the earlier covenant by a fresh symbol prophesying the continuance of the race. There is also, in connexion with the children of Noah, taken with the following chapter, the great ethnological forecast of the history of the world, so unlike everything in the earliest literature; for as Jehovah

Confirmation of this view.

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is the "God of Shem," the leading place of the Shemite stock in religion is indicated, with the comparative degradation of the Hamite, and the passing over of the knowledge of God to the Japhetic, in a way which the whole relations of Asia to Europe, and reactions of Europe on Asia more and more confirm. A writer so little given to prophetic fancies as the late Baron Bunsen has been struck with this; and in his *Bibelwerk* has seen in this dwelling of Japhet in the tents of Shem, what "in the highest sense is fulfilled in Christianity." [1]

The call of Abraham.

The next step in prophetic literature brings us into contact with the name of Abraham. His call, as it is known in Jewish and Christian theology, designed in connexion with his migration, to save the world from growing idolatry, has had light recently cast upon it, showing that "Ur" of the Chaldees was in the midst of moon and sun worship; and even his residence in Canaan, and war with the kings of the East, has been confirmed by the evidence of an Elamite dynasty of that age reaching westward to the Mediterranean. The first utterance of an apparently prophetic character made to Abraham is in Gen. xii. 2, 3:—

Confirmation of the Bible account.

"I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee and make thy name great: and thou shalt be a blessing; and I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee, and in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed."

[1] *Bibelwerk*, I. p. 23.

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With regard to this we would notice that—

The stress laid on the call of Abraham and the promises made to him.

First, the greatest stress is laid on it. It stands at the head of a visibly new development in the history. It is in one way or other repeated more frequently than anything else in the Book of Genesis. The temporal part of the promise, that Abraham should have a son, or that he should be the father of nations, or many nations, or that kings should be his offspring, is reiterated too often to be here stated; while the spiritual side of the promise, as to all nations being blessed in him, is repeated twice again in his own lifetime, once[1] when interceding for Sodom, and again[2] after offering up his son. This last time it is with the variation that the families are to be blessed in his seed. In like manner the promise is renewed to Isaac,[3] and to Jacob.[4] On this last occasion, the blessing of all the nations has the formulas united with it, "in thee and in thy seed." This universality of blessing is carried over into the seventy-second Psalm, ver. 17. It cannot be doubted that we have here a turning-point, which is held to affect henceforth all Jewish and all human history.

The Messianic sense of the promise.

Secondly, the sense of the words cannot be less than Messianic. I do not argue this chiefly from the creation of a separate people, and the securing of a separate territory through which the work of

[1] Gen xviii. 18. [2] Gen. xxii. 18.
[3] Gen. xxvi. 4 [4] Gen. xxviii. 14.

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redemption was to be accomplished. The context of Scripture would draw this passage thus indirectly to a Messianic significance. But this is only the smallest part of the oracle. How are the nations to be blessed in Abraham but in a spiritual manner? It is explained in connexion with circumcision that the covenant with Abraham meant that God was his God. Was not this blessing then to be extended, so that the very blessing of Abraham should become that of the nations? It has been held by some that the grammatical form of the original only means that Abraham was to be so prosperous that the nations should wish for themselves the same prosperity. This may be here and there a Hebrew idiom; but unfortunately for this scheme it is said that Abraham was to "be a blessing"; and unless we arbitrarily limit the sense, the nations must have wished this overflow of his deepest prosperity into their souls. The Messiah, therefore, as a Teacher and Saviour was necessary for this. And though we cannot say that the personality of the Messiah is here made prominent or sole, so far as the words go, yet it must be taken into account, in the very nature of things, so that without an Abrahamic seed the saying could not have been fulfilled.

Objection answered

This then leads to a *third* remark, that the words are not only a Messianic truth, but a real Messianic prophecy. It would not be very easy

A real Messianic prophecy contained in the promise to Abraham.

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even on their temporal side to deny to these utterances a predictive character; but it might be objected that the bringing into Canaan of a new race from Mesopotamia with a new founder, though it involved great changes and race developments, might have been risked as a guess, or written after the event. But from what construction of history, or from what data in time, could the anticipation of a world-wide spiritual blessing in connexion with one man have arisen? No mythic greatness of Abraham, no actual influence of his supposed Jewish seed upon the world could have originated the story. If you take it either in its germinal character, or as expanded in the seventy-second Psalm, the world never saw and never could have conceived a universal religion of righteousness and peace. This defies all post-dating of the Pentateuch and Psalms; for you are little nearer the phenomenon at the end than at the beginning. Is it then a dream, a mere devout prophetic craze? Those are not entitled to say so who think that the whole world has received some permanent blessing through Abraham's seed, least of all those who with Kuenen trace back to them a pure monotheism. Much more those who see not only the one God exalted, but reconciled and made nigh by the incarnation of His own Son as Abraham's great descendant, and His gospel moving on to bless all nations, and who recognize—

The anticipation of world-wide spiritual blessing through one man inexplicable on any natural theory.

Defies all post-dating of the Pentateuch and the Psalms.

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"The blessing of Abraham as coming on the Gentiles by Jesus Christ, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit by faith."[1]

All conditions of true prophecy meet in the promises made to Abraham.

Every condition of prophecy here meets—an anterior oracle—a glimpse beyond mortal ken into the history of religion, and an actual connexion of Abraham's name with an influence more and more filling the world. Why is it that nothing equal can be said of any of the shadowy kings dug up in the homes of Abraham's childhood?

Jacob's dying blessing on his sons.

An interesting step is taken in the development of this plan, as Christians believe, in the blessing of his sons by the dying Jacob. The unanimous tradition of Judaism also, as attested in its earliest translations, targums, and commentaries has found in the blessing of Judah[2] an anticipation of the Messiah. In reasoning, however, with those who have forsaken alike the Church and the Synagogue, I cannot lay quite the same stress on this otherwise remarkable verse as on the utterances regarding Abraham. It is, indeed, as helped by the Abrahamic oracles, and still more than in their case by the announcements of later ages, that its value to the argument is realized. But value it still has, as the force of many prophecies does not lie so much in their uniform resistless application to Christ, as in their manifold and often varying, yet still appreciable, applicability. With this qualification the words deserve to be pondered:

[1] Gal. iii. 14. [2] Gen. xlix. 10.

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The blessing on Judah.

"The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a law-giver from between his feet, until Shiloh come, and unto Him shall the gathering [homage] of the people [peoples] be."

It needs no force to put on this language a Messianic sense. Though the tribe of Judah is described in its lion-like strength, and in other features of temporal prosperity, yet the oracle professes to refer to "the last days;" and the patriarch interrupts the whole series of disclosures with the words of lofty spiritual import:

"I have waited for Thy salvation, O Lord!"

Messianic features of it.

The words anyhow suit a voluntary rule far more than a conquest; and this is indisputable and a striking additional Messianic feature, if according to Gesenius, who did not always adhere to the view, the majority of Hebraists have rightly understood by "Shiloh" a personal name, and one of the same import with Isaiah ix. 5, "The Prince of peace." It is not easy to think that these words were an after-thought, designed to fill up a gap in the genealogy of the Jewish Messiah, which had now been traced through Eve and Noah, down to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and yet are we to ascribe it to accident that they coincide with the tribe of our Lord's birth, and prepare for all that is said of Him as the Son of David? Nor is it without weight that beyond the commanding place of Judah, which outshone everything in Israel, and at length eclipsed its name, the advent of the

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greater and wider Ruler should have occurred at the critical period when the sceptre was departing and had not quite departed. Although this oracle may not have the absolutely incontestable force (to unbelievers) of the blessing of Abraham, it contains so much both of prophet-like matter and fulfilment that it cannot well be disregarded.

The prophecy of Balaam.

The same remark applies to the first grand echo of this regal utterance—the prophecy of Balaam in Numbers xxiv. 17, as to the star that should come out of Jacob, and the sceptre that should rise out of Israel. Some may regard all this as balanced by what they may think the legend of the ass that spake: but not those who consider how masterly as a moral study the portrait of Balaam is, and how marvellous as lyrics are his oracles. For the view of this passage which makes it contain a prophecy, and that of one far beyond any ordinary king like David, who subdued Moab and Edom, there is to be considered first the whole current of Jewish interpretation. This was so decisive that when the last great effort of the Jews to shake off the Roman yoke was made under the emperor Hadrian, the false Messiah who led them, supported by all the influence of one of their greatest Rabbis, Akiba, assumed this emblem, and was known as the son of a star (*Bar-Cocheba*). As applied to Christ, it denotes a Messiah of a very different order; and there is a peculiar gran-

Jewish interpretation

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Grandeur of the prophecy.

deur in making the prophet, who had been hired to curse, pronounce a blessing on the people of God, under this last and greatest of their leaders, and celebrate his enduring sway, when not only present enemies, like Moab, Edom, and Amalek, but others far in the future, like Assyria and Rome, passed away. It has been justly said that the reference to the "ships from the coast of Chittim" (Cyprus), which can only refer to the eastward movements of the Roman power, excludes every supposition which could make this a late interpolation in the Pentateuch, and constrain an application to the Messianic King, to whom the Old Testament horizon ever stretches. This lesson is independent of the star of the wise men in the Gospel of Matthew. To those who believe in miracles it will be a special confirmation, that this particular feature in our Lord's history is thus pre-indicated, which brings on the scene men from the east so very different from the seer who first caught sight of the emblem. But the fulfilment would have been true in a great and irresistible Saviour-king, defeating and outlasting all the powers of the world, even had no literal star heralded His birth; and thus attested by friend and foe — by the founder of Israel's line, and the diviner called in to extirpate it—that royal image starts up in the Bible, which never afterwards forsakes it.

Its application to the Messiah necessary.

Confirmation to believers in miracles.

It is worthy of notice, however, that the Penta-

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teuch does not end until another figure or shadow of this coming Leader is disclosed, viz., that of a Prophet. This takes place in the eighteenth chapter of Deuteronomy, where Moses from the fifteenth verse to the end speaks of the Prophet that should be raised up like unto himself. Two views have generally divided interpreters here. The one of these regards the text as making provision for the continuance of a prophetic body in Israel, so that the chosen nation might not be left to envy the heathen, nor on the other hand be visited with such immediate and terrible revelations as had almost overwhelmed them at Sinai. This continuous prophecy, real but mediate and human, like that of Moses, is regarded by these interpreters as the thing promised, while the Messiah is held to come in as the culmination of the whole. Now, even this view is a wonderful reach into the future, as there was no time for a prophecy after the event, and how could Moses or any one personating him know that he stood at the head of a continuous body, and that revelation, such as he knew it in himself, was to be prolonged to an indefinite future? But it is impossible to limit the words of Moses to this collective sense; and both what he knew of himself and what the Old Testament literature unanimously accords to him—a place altogether pre-eminent, must have led to a proportionately exalted idea of the coming Prophet. This does not

The Prophet like unto Moses.

Mediate interpretation.

Immediate interpretation.

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exclude successors in his work, who rather are taken for granted; but the emphasis must have been laid upon a true Equal, one who should make a new beginning, and speak with the commanding authority which he alone possessed. Hence this view impressed itself on the whole Old Testament Church—as we see in the latest oracle of Malachi, and as is vouched for by the New Testament taken simply as a human document, recording among Jews and Samaritans the expectation of a transcendent Teacher and Reformer, such as the world had but once seen before. Indeed, in the circumstances of the case, to be equal to Moses was to be greater, for if Moses was simply repeated, what need of another lawgiver or founder? How, then, can the denier of revelation account for these facts: *first*, for the expectation ascribed to Moses, and *secondly*, for its fulfilment? The very desire and anticipation were singular. Great men do not usually subordinate themselves to others, or think of their work as waiting on some greater personality, who is to take up its unfinished issues. The Christian scheme of things accounts for this in Moses, who looked not only for a kindred spirit but for a personal Saviour, whose work was more than the sequel of his own. And still more wonderful is the realization of this hope, which after fifteen centuries arrived: for the prevailing opinion even of the world is that Christ is of the same mould

The personal application adopted by the whole Old Testament Church.

The expectation ascribed to Moses and its fulfilment unaccountable unless supernatural.

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with Moses, only greater and more commanding,—working in the same element, and making the work of Moses, which seemed exhausted or defeated, renew and exalt itself in His own. By what mystery, then, did the Christian Church in its faint beginning seize on this greatness of Christ, dream—if it was a dream—that Moses stooped on the Mount to this yet obscure Prophet, and that God had even come nearer in Him than in Moses' days? He who will answer this will find the key to this oracle and a great deal more; he who will, to escape an answer, deny redemption, with prophecy and miracle as its handmaids, must make all history common place, and treat Moses and Jesus as alike only in bringing them down from any throne of greatness to share its fall.

The Church's conception of Christ unaccountable on any natural explanation of prophecy.

Prophecy takes an extraordinary leap forward, and in another direction, with the rise of the kingdom of Israel in David. There is an intermediate figure in Samuel. But the history itself passes on to the regal period, developing what, in spite of failure in Saul, was the true meaning of all that went before, and bringing upon the scene the grandest emblem and beginning of what, in Messianic days, was to be known as "the kingdom of heaven." The glimpses in the oracles of Jacob and of Balaam, which had once and again been suddenly renewed in the dark and troubled ages of the Judges, now break out into

The rise of the Davidic kingdom.

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steady and concentrated light, and in connection with the person, the line, and almost more, the Psalms of David, lighten the world to all generations.

David a turning-point in human history.

David is indeed, like Moses, one of the turning points in human history, as supreme in gifts, as immeasurable in grace; if not so awful and gigantic, more tender and captivating; and by his very fall and repentance brought nearer to human sympathy and tears. Fitted by unrivalled military genius and statesmanship to give the chosen people strength

His mission.

and repose, and, as the man after God's own heart, to build up the theocracy as a great national kingdom and worship with a fidelity never equalled, and that have made Zion the joy of the whole earth, he enriched that sanctuary and every other with the incomparable treasure of a sacred song which, unlike every other form of lyric, leaves all terrestrial glories and hopes unsung, and amidst the unutterable sin, sorrow, and solitude in the soul of man, is still a perpetual thirsting after God, the living God. This mission of David's, unexhausted and inexhaustible, has made him the bosom friend of all saints in every age and clime; and to this belong the extreme vicissitudes of his experience, and also his kingly elevation and trials, fitting in to the divine plan of the descent from his line of a yet greater King and Sufferer. The an-

The crowning revelation is given.

nouncement by the prophet Nathan to David that his line should include the Messiah, and thus last

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for ever, is, with no reason to dispute the statement, recorded in 2 Samuel vii., in connexion with David's purpose to build a temple; and with equal beauty this oracle reappears in the "last words of David," in 2 Samuel xxiii. 1–8, where he recalls his twofold function as one standing in relation to the Messiah, and also as the psalmist of Israel; and where he derives comfort from the covenant thus made as "ordered in all things and sure." It does not follow, indeed, that David had no revelations as to the Messiah before this last and crowning one, or that he did not see in his own chequered and wonderful life prefigurations of a yet stranger and more glorious destiny. This is one of the questions of criticism respecting which there never will be absolute unity, as to how far at any time David consciously painted his own experience; how far that of the Messiah; and how many of his royal psalms, such as perhaps the second and the sixteenth, preceded the special promise; how many, like the eighteenth, twenty-second, and one hundred and tenth followed it. It is enough that whether of Davidic or Solomonic, or yet later authorship, an ever-recurrent echo starts up in the Psalter of the kingly birth and call of the Messiah, and that in grand resonant cadences, as in the seventy-second, the eighty-ninth, and one hundred and thirty-second Psalms, His descent from David fills the Christian ear in every land.

Unsettled questions of criticism.

An ever-recurrent echo of the Messiah in the Psalms.

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Later announcements.

In perfect harmony with this fixed position of Davidic descent, are many announcements in the pages of that written prophecy which commenced about 800 B.C., and ran down till the close of the canon in Malachi. Thus in Isaiah iv. 2, mention is made of one who is simply spoken of as the "Branch" (the branch of Jehovah), but this title is connected expressly in Isaiah xi. 1, with the family of David,—

The Branch.

"There shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of His roots,"

with all the usual attributes of the Messianic kingdom. It could hardly be urged by any objector that this might possibly apply to some other descendant of Jesse of Bethlehem than in the line of David; for the obvious reason of going back to Jesse is the decayed state into which the royal family was to fall; just as in Amos ix. 11, we read—

"In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen."

The child born, the son given.

In like manner the great oracle, Isaiah ix. 6—

"Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given,"

is connected with David's line, for in the next verse it is said—

"Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end *upon the throne of David*;"

while these utterances all seem to claim a higher nature for this ruler, as also in Isaiah vii. 14—

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"Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel;" Immanuel.

connexion with David's house is more or less clearly involved, as even in this last case, the sign is given as a pledge that in spite of invasion the royal line should not fail, and the holy land is thus addressed, "Thy land, O Immanuel!"[1]

In Jeremiah the same notices recur, evidently coloured by foregoing anticipations: thus, Jeremiah xxiii. 6; xxxiii. 15—

"Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a king shall reign and prosper." The righteous Branch.

"In those days, and at that time, will I cause the Branch of righteousness to grow up unto David."

There is a text in Ezekiel xxxiv. 23,—

"And I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even my servant David,"—

which speaks as if not a descendant of David, but David himself, returning to earth might be the future king; and the same language is found in xxxvii. 24— David's return to rule apparently predicted.

"David my servant shall be king over them."

But it can hardly be supposed that this prophet who shows himself everywhere so familiar with Isaiah and Jeremiah meant anything different; and we may well understand also in the same light the utterance in Hosea iii. 4, 5, spoken two hundred years before Ezekiel, in which, anticipating a cap-

[1] Isa. viii. 8.

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tivity that should lead to the people of Israel being "many days without a king," he adds—

"Afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the Lord their God, and David their king."

Detailed predictions concerning the great Ruler.

To this mass of testimony, all pointing forward to a great ruler, who should spring from David, and yet be greater, I would simply add, as the references are so well known, the two texts, one of which[1] declares that this ruler should be born in Bethlehem, which was David's birth-place; and another,[2] that he should come riding on an ass to Jerusalem, which had been the seat of David's power. We are thus brought face to face with the question, How the deniers of Christianity as a revelation have treated this great amount of striking evidence, and how far they have been able to resolve these apparent prophecies into mere natural guesses and coincidences?

Jewish interpretations.

It is hard to be denied that the Jewish literature, antecedent to, and outside of Christianity, now preserved in the Talmud and kindred writings, applied almost all the texts which we have quoted, with others that are to follow, to the Messiah. The only noticeable exception, perhaps, is the passage as to Immanuel, where in their interpretations there is something like silence, though not contradiction.[3] It was interesting to see how when the

[1] Micah v. 2. [2] Zech. ix. 9.

[3] This statement is borne out by the citations under the different texts from the great work of Schoettgen *De Messia*, Dresden and Leipzic, 1742.

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great Deistical controversy of last century was waged against the argument from prophecy, as against all other parts of the Christian argument, the leaders of English unbelief would treat these facts in the history of Jewish interpretation. Their chief representative, Anthony Collins, boldly denied not only that Isaiah and the other prophets referred to any single person or descendant of David, who thence came to be looked for as the Messiah, but that any clear or consistent expectation of such a person could be found in the line of Jewish tradition for any period worth naming before Christ.

Messianic predictions denied by Collins and the Deists of last century.

It was not possible that such a violation of all literary fairness should not be avenged; and hence in our own century, Strauss, in order to build up his own fabric has run the ploughshare of destruction over the foundations of that of Collins. It was not necessary in the eighteenth century to account for the origin of Christianity; but this is now the life and death question of unbelief; and Strauss required for this purpose a long and wide currency of expectation of a Messiah among the Jews, who was not a mere conqueror and world-monarch, but a teacher also, and even a sufferer, whom the disciples of Jesus, when their Master was crucified, might console themselves by finding, and plausibly teach their countrymen to find, in the Old Testament books, and in the current interpretations of them. Hence he cannot make too much of the help of

Strauss's views of the Messianic element in Hebrew literature conflicts with Collins

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those "Jews" whom Collins treated so contemptuously, and has even possibly exaggerated the Messianic element in Hebrew and Talmudical literature. But his concessions as to the Old Testament are most important. Thus in his *Neues Leben Jesu*, 1864 (p. 170), he says,—

Strauss's concessions as to the Old Testament.

"In the prophets the tendency to a more spiritual form of religion was accompanied by another. They made, no doubt, the elevation of the people of Israel to true piety the indispensable condition of the return of better times . . . But while they painted this better future after the model of the good old times which the people had enjoyed under their king David, there was connected with this hope the expectation of a ruler of David's style, of David's line, who should exalt his people from the depth of their present fall, to a height of power and prosperity surpassing the days of the David of old."

Thus the Christian Church, at the very hands of its opponents, regains its prophecies, so far as their early origin and spiritual meaning are concerned. And now the only question is as to the fulfilment; for if Jesus of Nazareth be really a descendant of the royal family of David, here is a most wonderful reach into the future in the case of one who is confessedly the most remarkable figure in history. Hence the royal descent of Jesus is denied by Renan, who charges Him with assuming the title "Son of David" not ignorantly, but against His own better feelings.

The question of fulfilment.

"He allowed them to give him a title without which he could not hope for any success."[1]

[1] *Vie de Jésus*, p. 238.

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Renan's position.

Renan does not seem to see that if Jesus accepted the title, as is granted, He must have done so not only in good faith, but considering His means of knowledge, with moral certainty; and that to affirm the opposite is to aggravate all the difficulties and contradictions put by him into what he admits to be the greatest of human characters. Strauss here, though he does not thus degrade the Saviour morally, is involved in equal perplexity. He grants that the Messiah was universally believed among the Jewish people to be the "Son of David." He grants also that Jesus claimed to be the Messiah. And he grants that He applied to Himself the prophecies above quoted from Isaiah and Jeremiah which foretold that the Messiah should have this descent. How then can Strauss exclude the inference that Jesus believed Himself to be the descendant of David? By the most arbitrary supposition, that Jesus wished to educate His disciples and the people into the idea that the Messiah was not to be the Son of David, which was a mere worldly name, but something more spiritual. The only shadow of proof that he can adduce for this is that Jesus challenged in the Temple the current interpretation of the one hundred and tenth Psalm, and wished to suggest that the Messiah was not to be David's son, but his Lord, though Strauss, of course, cannot grant that He contended for any

Strauss's perplexity.

His arbitrary supposition.

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higher nature as His prerogative. But what this intermediate something between Davidic descent and a higher nature was, which Jesus here suggested, Strauss has not explained, and as his interpretation had no precursors, so it has had no successors. It is as certain then, as anything can be, if we grant the least historic value to the narratives, that Jesus was not only regarded by His followers, who had the best means of knowing, but by Himself, as the descendant of David; and when we think of the care with which the Jews kept their registers, and even of the security which a great family tradition like this always carries with it for being accurately transmitted, we may consider it, in all the circumstances of the case, as truly remarkable that so much evidence confirms this lofty claim. There are difficulties in the genealogies, but these have not been found insuperable by the ablest scholars; and the fact, that the Davidic birth was believed, not only by the evangelists, but by Paul[1] and by the author of the Apocalypse, whom most rationalists now regard as the apostle John,[2] but above all by the Founder of Christianity Himself, and was accepted in an age when the whole evidence was patent, as a foundation principle of the new religion, must be held far to outweigh these remaining obscurities.

Jesus regarded by His followers and by Himself as the Messiah.

Difficulties in the genealogies not insuperable.

Far outweighed by other considerations.

Far stronger, however, does this Davidic element

[1] Rom. i. 3. [2] Rev. xxii. 16.

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become, when we take in the actual birth of Jesus in Bethlehem, apparently foretold, as we have seen, in Micah v. 2. Jewish tradition was here, as far as we know, unanimous; and, according to the Gospels, it found its accomplishment. Strauss cannot here deny the agreement with Micah; for as the mythical theory demands, the history itself must be moulded by the earlier notice, and its Jewish echoes. But can the perversion of history as he holds it, be admitted, and a Christ born at Nazareth be turned into one born in Bethlehem? Strauss has granted how difficult it was to do this, when the facts were so widely known. Why, then, are the evangelists to be credited with a tortuous and unhistorical procedure instead of a simple and true one? Or how can Strauss and Renan find any authority for roundly asserting, against their united testimony, that Jesus was born at Nazareth? There is here nothing like miracle in the fact itself, and now to follow, now to desert, the evangelists in natural events (and it was quite as natural for a subsequently renowned Jew to be born at Bethlehem, as at Nazareth) is mere license. Luke brings Jesus to Bethlehem, they say, to fulfil a prophecy; and do they not remove Him to escape one? The prejudice is at least equal, and unfortunately for the modern critics, they are not, and cannot be, themselves authorities in ancient history.

The birth of Jesus at Bethlehem.

The assertion of Strauss and Renan that He was born at Nazareth contrary to all evidence.

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The entry into Jerusalem.

With regard to the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem, the city of David, as the foregoing notices in Zech. ix. 9, are so clear, as to have drawn after them an immense body of Jewish Messianic tradition, so the historical accounts in the Gospels are less contested. Reimarus in the last century founded on the incident his attack on Jesus for attempting to set up a temporal kingdom. Renan incorporates the essential facts in his own narrative.[1] Strauss, though he affirms that the tradition was sufficient to have created the history, also grants that the history in itself might well have happened.[2] The whole tendency of recent gospel criticism, and especially the failure of objections to the fourth Gospel, which here, in a rare instance, repeats an incident fully stated in the Synoptists, confirm the admission. Let it be remembered also that the tenth verse of the ninth chapter of Zechariah has had a great fulfilment: for He who rode in this lowly triumph into Jerusalem has been a true Davidic king, as elsewhere pictured, and especially in the seventy-second Psalm, cutting off the chariot, the horse, and the battle-bow, and speaking peace to the nations. If any say therefore that Jesus rode into Jerusalem arbitrarily to fulfil the prophecy, they are met by its own terms; for the history of the world has supported Him, and—

Strauss admits that it might have happened.

Recent criticism confirms the admission.

[1] *Vie de Jésus*, p. 375. [2] *Neues Leben Jesu*, p. 526.

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"His dominion has been from sea to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth."

At this point a brief notice may be given of the large cycle of apparent predictions bearing on Christ's life and ministry. It seems to be indicated that some messenger should go before Him, as in Isaiah xl. 3 and Malachi iv. 5, 6; and as in this passage Elijah is mentioned, the prevalent opinion of the Jews has been, that Elijah should literally return, and do this office for the Messiah. It is equally certain that Jesus claimed to be thus heralded by the Baptist; and that John took this position. It is easy to say that there is mistake of prophecy or exaggeration of friendly relations here. But the singularity is that the coincidence in time of two great teachers—one of whom, if the narrative be worth anything, thus stooped to the other, is an historical fact, which could not have been foreseen; and all that is needed to make it a prophecy, is the use of a figurative name for a literal—a feature quite common in the prophetic style. It is worthy of remark that Riehm, a high authority in these discussions, though adverse to detached and sporadic interpretations, regards this as a true prediction, and one which brings out the depth of the Old Testament.[1]

The forerunner.

Jesus and the Baptist.

Riehm's admission.

The same writer, whose reserve and caution no one will question, accepts as—

[1] *Messianische Weissagung. Studien und Kritiken*, 1869, II. 271.

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"Quite unassailable by historical criticism, the surprising accordance of New Testament fulfilment[1] with the Old Testament prophecy,[2] that to the dwellers by the Lake of Gennesaret and Jordan, of the tribes of Zebulon and Naphtali, the light of Messianic salvation should first arise;"[3]

where it may be added that alike in the oracle and the history the "darkness" of a depressed, outcast, and half paganized state, strangely contrasts with Renan's pictures of Galilee.

Jewish expectation concerning the Messiah.

That the Messiah should work miracles, so as at least not to fall below the great names of the Old Testament period, was, as all admit, universally expected by the Jews. The writers who support the mythical or legendary theory appeal to Isaiah xxxv. 5, 6, which furnished according to them a kind of programme such as Jesus was bound to fulfil. Strauss is here inclined to think that Jesus disclaimed in His reply to the messengers of John physical wonders, and applied the text of Isaiah only to His cures on the soul. All the literal cures which he allows to Jesus were due to nervous sympathy and influence of imagination. But Strauss has here unwittingly involved himself in great difficulty. He grants that the people were sufficiently cool to credit the Baptist with no miracles. He grants that the class of marvels, which were truly miraculous, such as cures of the blind and raisings of the dead, were then, as always, in the nature of things, distin-

Strauss's dilemma concerning Christ's miracles.

[1] Matt. iv. 13. [2] Isa. viii. 23. [3] Riehm, p. 277.

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guishable from natural effects on the nervous system.[1] He also grants that the people expected from the Messiah the greatest wonders. He has, therefore, failed to explain how miracles without reality made such an impression, and has thus left the supernatural narratives as necessary as ever. But if so, do not the prophecies also stand? Had the words of Isaiah been meant for true miracles they could not have been stronger; and it is one of the infirmities of this scheme, that in seeking to generate an ideal miracle from an ideal prophecy, it threatens to establish the reality of both.

His failure to explain the impression made.

All ages have admired the exquisite beauty of thought and harmony of numbers with which the Davidic king in the first half of Isaiah is brought upon the scene, while all nature is transformed by His sceptre into gentleness and peace. Not less enchanting are the pictures in the second half of the book, where the monarch passes into the teacher, the comforter, the inexhaustibly tender and patient servant of Jehovah, who feeds His flock like a shepherd, who has the tongue of the learned that He may know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary,—

Isaiah's pictures of the advent of the Davidic king.

"Who does not cry nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street, and who does not quench the smoking flax, nor break the bruised reed."

Is there one being in all history to whom these words and many others are so instinctively applied

Their application to Jesus Christ.

[1] *Neues Leben Jesu*, p. 267.

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as to Jesus Christ? and could He have more significantly begun His ministry in Nazareth than by quoting and applying to Himself the utterance—

The ministry of Christ.

"The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me, because the Lord hath anointed Me to preach good tidings unto the meek," etc.[1]

Do we not hear already the words of beatitude, "Blessed are the meek," "Blessed are they that mourn," "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden"? It is vain to speak here of a first and second Isaiah. If there are two, it is still more wonderful than if there is one. Nor is the argument weakened by the various application of the title "Servant of Jehovah," now to a collective Israel, and now to one individual or "Elect," in whom the idea of service is perfectly realized: for much of prophecy, as in the Psalms, is equally typical, and the unity of Christ and His body is thus revealed. The applicability of these Isaian oracles to the meek and lowly Teacher has impressed even recent leaders of unbelief: for Renan has caught something of sympathy with their incomparable charm, for which Christians may forgive him much that is otherwise alien and degrading; and Strauss has been softened almost into recognition. He holds that Jesus applied all these features of meekness, patience, and suffering to Himself, and formed Himself on this wonderful

Recent leaders of unbelief impressed by the resemblance of Jesus to the picture drawn by Isaiah.

[1] Isa. lxi. 1.

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model, instead of the warlike and victorious Messiah of popular anticipation; and now, that these oracles —hundreds of years old—even if they pointed only to the better part of a race, should thus at length come true of it, and of one transcendent person in it, who is the Teacher of the world, is not this almost as strange as what a Christian believes?

Predictions of Messiah's death.

Of all the predictions claimed for the Messiah the most wonderful are those which bear upon His death. This is a fresh singularity, that, as Christians attach so much importance to this event, the Old Testament should seem here also to concentrate its rays. Jewish tradition is here less copious, though not without striking testimonies; and the offence of the cross, either before or after the Christian period, led to the conception of two Messiahs, the one, the Son of Joseph, who should suffer and die,—the other, the Son of David, who should reign. When the prophecies are now studied in the light of history, much of this darkness is cleared away, and is seen to have lain mostly in the prejudices of Jewish readers. Modern difficulties are largely of the same character, such as objections to the doctrine of atonement, aggravated by the reluctance to admit what, if true, is so visibly supernatural. How far recent German theology has emerged from these struggles may be seen in writers whom no one will charge with "blind orthodoxy." Thus Riehm says—

Jewish readers conceived two Messiahs.

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Riehm on the 22nd Psalm and on Isaiah xlii. 2.

"Of this agreement, the most remarkable example is the 22nd Psalm, where the image of the crucified Christ surrounded by His triumphant enemies, comes out unmistakably for every Christian eye."

He in the same place also appeals to "the agreement of the picture which the prophecy of the 'Servant of Jehovah' has drawn with that of Christ, in many quite special features."[1] To the same effect Delitzsch, in discussing Isaiah liii. says:—

Delitzsch on Isaiah liii. and Zechariah.

"Now for the first time the type of sacrifice which was previously dumb, begins to speak through the idea of the Servant of Jehovah. He pours out His soul in death, and His soul thus brings a satisfactory offering, which atones and makes reparation for the sins of the people. He takes the guilt of His people's sins upon Himself. . . . The Servant of Jehovah dies and is buried, but not in order to remain in death, but that He may live eternally as the priestly and royal head of a great congregation."[2]

Thus also, when he has applied to Christ the two oracles in Zechariah that speak of the pierced One (xii. 10), and of the Fountain opened (xiii. 1), he adds in regard to the smitten Shepherd (xiii. 7),

"The New Testament references (Matt. xxvi. 31, etc.; Mark xiv. 27) are so far fully justified, as they apply these utterances to Jesus Christ, to His death and its consequences."[3]

Oehler on Isaiah liii.

So also Oehler, while granting a starting-point in a collective Israel, says:—

"Chapter liii. [in Isaiah] can only refer to an individual. Hence Ewald, *e.g.*, regards this portion as interpolated from an older book, in which a single martyr was spoken of. For it is

[1] Isaiah xlii. 2; l. 5, etc.; liii. 2.

[2] Delitzsch, *Messianic Prophecies*, p. 86. Clark, 1880.

[3] *Ibid*, p. 106.

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not the heathen who speak, as the utterly erroneous view now so widely disseminated asserts, but the prophet, now in the name of the prophets in general, ver. 1: 'Who hath believed our report?' and now in that of the people, ver. 6: 'All we like sheep have gone astray,' etc. The sense of guilt is so vivid, even in the case of the prophets, who know themselves to be the servants of God, that they include themselves in the sinful mass of the people, for whom an atonement is needed: 'We are all as the unclean,' (comp. lix. 12). Hence a valid intercession for the people cannot proceed from them (lix. 16), nor can even the aggregate of God's servants effect an atonement. On the contrary, it is upon the foundation of its intuition of those witnesses who have suffered in the cause of truth, that prophecy rises to the intuition of One in whom the image of the faithful servant is complete—of One who, not for His own sins, but as the substitute of the people, and for their sins, lays down His life."[1]

Strauss's concession.

These testimonies of eminent Christian theologians, trained in somewhat different schools, are interesting: but far more striking, to my mind, is the concession here of Strauss, one of the most important in the course of apologetical literature. It is known that in his early editions of his work from 1835 onward, he denied to Christ any certain knowledge of His own death, or announcement of it to His disciples. But in 1864, his new life of Jesus discloses that on so serious a question he has changed his ground. He avows his belief that Jesus not only announced His own decease, but did so in terms of such oracles as Isaiah liii., which had been the model of His life and doctrine.

His position in 1835.

His change of ground in 1864.

"As to the calling of the teacher patience is indispensable, as the unwearied instructor must take into account

[1] Oehler. *Theology of the Old Testament*, II. p. 426. Clark, 1875.

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ingratitude, and overcome the prejudices of men by long-suffering, as in the history of the Jewish prophets examples were before Him of several who had sealed their fidelity to the religion of Jehovah, as through them proclaimed and defended, by a martyr's death, there thus arose for Him an approximation to those features of the servant of Jehovah, which contained suffering, torture, and cruelties even unto death. It is possible that from the very beginning, Jesus kept closer to the features of the first class, and that He wished to be the Messiah in the sense of the still and patient Teacher; but the more He encountered among the people a want of receptivity and positive resistance, the more that He saw the hatred of the rulers excited against Him, and was convinced of its irreconcilable opposition, the more had He occasion to take up also the strictly suffering features of Isaiah 50th, 52nd, and 53rd, into His Messianic conception, to ponder the examples of earlier prophets, whom He alludes to in Matt. xxiii. 37. and Luke xiii. 33, and elsewhere, expecting like them extreme measures, apprehension, condemnation, and execution, and to prepare His followers for such an issue. That point of view also which led Him to contemplate the devotion of His life as a 'ransom for many' (Matt. xx. 28), His death as a reconciling sacrifice, He could well have appropriated to Himself from Isa. liii., as this view in general lay near the Jewish circle of ideas."[1]

Agreement with Christian writers.

Thus for once there is agreement between the Christian writers and the leader of unbelief as to the long antecedence of the oracles, and their historic fulfilment, both in the meaning of the prophet, and the spirit and aim of the Sufferer. It is not necessary to bring in features of suffering from other Scriptures; the broad general outline of that one chapter is unique in history. Nor can it be said that the dwelling on the prophecy and repeating it led to its fulfilment. Christ had no power to secure His own public condemnation and execution

[1] *Neues Leben Jesu*, pp. 223–4.

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on ordinary principles. Hence this restrained Strauss so long from admitting that He predicted such a death. But the strength of the Christian position remains, and is confessed. The premises are admitted, of which Christianity is the only conclusion; and the name of Jesus stands written upon the greatest phenomenon (we must not call it miracle) in history.

The strength of the Christian position unshaken.

With regard to the resurrection of the Messiah the light of prophecy is much less distinct and clear. Still, both the twenty-second Psalm and the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, which speak of the Messiah's death, and follow it up by setting forth His life and victory, thereby imply a resurrection. In like manner, the sixteenth Psalm (v. 10), whether we read it in the singular or plural requires a resurrection; for corruption is escaped only by His people, and by Himself, through His rising from the grave. A typical prophecy was here in place—the sign of Jonah, as Christ interpreted it; and though this may not have been understood in its full meaning before the event, it had in it a true inherent light, and is now added to the impressive list of singularities that by a proved correspondence connect at every point the Old Testament with the New. Those who have regarded Jesus as able to learn from the Old Testament His own death, but bound to stop there, or only led to hope for a spiritual life in heaven

The resurrection of Christ implied in the 22nd Psalm and the 53rd of Isaiah, etc.

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or a victory of His cause on earth, are incoherent; and the Gospel narratives, which make His views of prophecy embrace both death and resurrection, are at once grander in their scheme and truer in their history.

Prophetic dates.

One word in regard to the dates in prophecy, that have always been remarked though some are less secure than others. The sceptre was not to depart from Judah; and in the very time when the last trace of self-government was vanishing, the Messiah came. He was to come to the second temple,[1] and make its glory greater than that of the first.[2] Seventy weeks were to elapse[3] from the decree to rebuild Jerusalem unto Messiah the Prince, which upon the calculation of a day for a year,[4] have been plausibly carried down by Dr. Pusey and many others from the edict of Artaxerxes (B.C. 457) to the opening of Christ's ministry. More solid than any of these is the coming of the new kingdom, in Daniel ii. and vii., after four great world-monarchies, which the same writer has, in its Messianic fulfilment, so ably defended against the shifting schemes of recent criticism. Data like these undoubtedly produced a wide-spread expectation of some great kingdom to rise in the East, of which we have evidence in the well-known passages of Josephus, of Tacitus and Suetonius,

Widely diffused expectation of the rise of a great kingdom in the East.

[1] Mal. iii. 1. [2] Hag. ii. 7–9.
[3] Dan. ix. 24, 25. [4] Ezek. iv. 6.

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and echoes in the Sibylline books and Fourth Eclogue of Virgil. Even if we had had no other Old Testament indications, the very connexion of this great approaching change with the Jewish people and with Jerusalem would have been a chronological landmark; since on any fair construction the events could not have happened had Israel already become a wandering multitude, without a territory and a capital, as they have been for eighteen centuries.

II.

Prophecies relating to Christianity.

In passing over to the branch of the prophetic argument which treats of Christianity as its subject, Christ Himself is not left behind. It is Christ in His Church, as before in His own person. The prohecies bearing on Christianity may be reduced to three points — its succession to Judaism, its victories, and its failures and corruptions.

Its succession to Judaism.

1. The succession of Christianity to Judaism is one of its most interesting features. The relation of type and antitype exists nowhere else among religions. No one can say that any of the forms of paganism is the same analogue of the Gospel as Judaism is; nor can Judaism be said to be in the same sense an analogue of Mohammedanism, for they stand more nearly on the same level, and the one is a plagiarism from the other. Had Mohammed been able to make out in his system

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an advance in the line of Christianity, or even of Judaism (as he wished to do), this would have been liker the voice of Providence than anything he had to show. But Christianity in relation to Judaism, as the Christian understands both, is this visibly higher type; while the same thing cannot be said of Judaism after the Jewish Messiah comes, as compared with what it is before. The Jewish Messiah has little to bring of prophecy, and nothing of priesthood; and his kingdom is more external than that of Christianity. Even the true Old Testament Judaism was inferior, with youth, immaturity, and restraint; but still there was a vigorous family likeness. There is thus a real foretoken of something to come—a covenant God, a moral worship, with all its local and ceremonial features, an availing though future propitiation, a high though unrealized practical standard, and a mission to the world yet held in abeyance. Was not this, then, a prophecy of the coming religion, as the lower type in nature is a prophecy of the higher? If another system, or rather the old system under new conditions, has redeemed, as the Epistle to the Hebrews explains, the promise of the Levitical law, given wings to the Decalogue, and bursting its own embankments, diffused its blessings among all nations, shall we not see in these tendencies and capacities the augury of the future? But the Old Testament is not thus a

Christianity an advance on Judaism.

Even on true Old Testament Judaism.

Its limitations and restraints a prophecy of a better dispensation to come.

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silent witness: it is a speaking one; and besides the testimony as to the Prophet like unto Moses, there is the great announcement of a better priesthood:[1]

The Old Testament announces a better priesthood.

"Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek;"

and there is also in Jer. xxxi. 31, the clear assertion of a new and better covenant of which the distinction should be its superiority in spiritual influence as seen in laws written on the heart. Now, can any candid unbeliever deny that this is the superiority of Christianity over Judaism, even in its best state, and much more as depraved by Jewish traditions? Is not then this sublimation and consummation of Judaism the fulfilment of prophecy? And ought it not to be so regarded by all writers—who as almost all Rationalists do—here side with Christ against His Jewish opponents, and concede that relatively to them He has made a great advance in the religion of the world? It is impressive to an unbeliever, but still more to a Jew, who sees his ancient sanctuary in ruin or worse than ruin, and his synagogue in all lands confronted by the Christian Church, which has transferred to itself all his watchwords and memorials, his patriarchs and his kings, his law and his prophets, his altars and his sacrifices, his circumcision and his passover, his Zion, his Jerusalem, his Canaan, and has connected them with

The consummation of Judaism the fulfilment of prophecy.

[1] Psa. cx. 4.

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one great Presence which exalts and overshadows all! Is there not here a great cycle in the spiritual world, and can chance, after it has foretold, also achieve, such revolutions as these?

The predicted spread of Christianity.

2. The next striking point is the prediction of victories for Christianity in the form not only of development, *but of diffusion and universal prevalence.* How great was the unlikelihood of any fulfilment? No one can say that the prophecy here comes after the event; for the prophets feel that they have to contend rather with unbelief in their hearers, and call on the mighty power of Jehovah as alone equal to the extremity.

"I the Lord have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee and give thee for a covenant of the people, and for a light to the Gentiles."[1]

Its world-wide sympathy and philanthropy.

Whence this unwonted faith, even greater than the world-wide sympathy and philanthropy, of which it is the minister? There is no progress here either in the range of expectation or in its confidence. Both are as wide and strong in the days of Abraham as of the last of the prophets. Many details are supplied and many astonishing figures employed: as that the Jewish temple should be exalted to the top of the mountains, and be the centre of a universal pilgrimage;[2] that wild and savage beasts should be transformed;[3] that a mighty river should go forth towards the Dead

[1] Isaiah xlii. 6. [2] Micah iv. 1; Isa. ii. 1. [3] Isa. xi. 6-9

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Sea, and heal everything in its course;[1] that a Spirit poured out from heaven should inspire a universal gift of prophecy.[2] Under these figures such solid realities are conveyed as the utter abolition of idolatry;[3] the spread of the knowledge of Jehovah, as the waters cover the sea;[4] the prevalence of a deep holiness;[5] and the practical enjoyment by nations of righteousness and peace.[6] These blessings are invariably represented as going forth from the Jewish people to other nations, and again and again from Jerusalem;[7] and while they are always connected with a new appearance of Jehovah, they are very often specialized as introduced by the Messiah, and also, in signal instances,[8] traced up to His sufferings and death. How then was this Jewish enthusiasm for the salvation of the world originated in a race in many respects so narrow and limited? How did it survive the damping effect of decay and corruption in their own religion, flourish in exile, and resist the incrustations of local and national sectarianism, till it found a glorious revival in Jesus and His disciples, who were ready to die for its fulfilment, and who actually did begin the fulfilment of it in a wonderful degree. Whence this magnificent ideal of a universal religion totally wanting in

Its achievements.

Whence the origin and persistence of these anticipations?

[1] Ezek. xlvii. 1–12.
[2] Joel ii. 28, 29.
[3] Isa. ii. 18.
[4] Isa. xi. 9.
[5] Zech. xiv. 20.
[6] Psa. lxvii. 12–14.
[7] Isa. ii. 3; Zech. xiv. 8.
[8] Psa. xxii.; Psa. liii.

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paganism, wanting, too, in Mohammedanism, except with dependence on brute force, and concessions to sinful lust which degrade and ruin it. The Christian Church has been struggling, as yet inadequately, for eighteen centuries to realize it; but it fires her warriors still with congenial ardour, and the noblest of them falling in the field, throws the casket which contains it outward into the region which it is yet to conquer. The greater the soul, the more does it, like these martyrs of an illimitable and imperishable faith, "move about in worlds not realized," "weep by the rivers of Babylon," and "favour the dust of Zion," the more does it dwell with their spirits and with His, who from the rejection of the cross looked forth upon a universal empire of truth and love. Is this enthusiasm and the success which has crowned it soluble upon any principles of unbelief, or has unbelief in itself the moral greatness to suggest an answer?

The struggles of the Christian Church to realise the prophetic ideal.

Unbelief cannot explain the facts.

3. The last element of wonder in these prophecies of victory *is the shade of delay, reaction, and corruption that blends with success.* In the prophets it is chiefly, if not exclusively, delay and failure. Far from being moved to write their prophecies, as some have supposed, only as suggested by the march of Assyrian armies, or the last rumours from Egypt or Babylon, or from seeing in the next change of the political horizon the birth-pang of the Messianic age, they rise

Prophetic anticipations of delay and failure.

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through the grandeur of the events described into something of their own tranquillity, and can make their watchwords, "He that believeth shall not make haste."[1] "I the Lord will hasten it in his time."[2] Hence they can repeat each other's oracles, and form a chain of expectation stretching through many years; and in the great future they can blend with calmness features of disappointment in the reception of the coming salvation, and most of all, the fall of Israel which, as in Isaiah xlix., mysteriously darkens the calling of the Gentiles. They can hardly, indeed, anticipate the corruptions of Christianity; for the prophetic language had hardly lights and shades for the varying features of an Israel beyond Israel. But in the New Testament this generality is resolved; and the strange fortunes of the Gospel itself in history, as made up of triumph and failure, of purity and corruption, of strength and weakness, and that not only in one age, but as more or less cleaving all through to its career, are most strikingly delineated. Broadly there stands out the unbelief of the Jews, and their exclusion from the kingdom, in the utterances of Christ Himself and the apostle Paul; nor can this be regarded as mere natural revenge, for it is announced with the deepest sadness, and a day of repentance is descried. The history of the world has followed the one set of

Features of Old Testament prophecy.

New Testament anticipations of the history of Christianity.

[1] Isaiah xxviii. 16. [2] Isaiah lx. 22.

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notices, but has not yet overtaken the other; and how is this foresight so far to be explained?

The corruptions of Christianity foreshadowed in the New Testament.

Equally striking is the foreshadowing of Christianity in its other miscarriages and reverses. Most of all its corruptions are marvellously preindicated. While the great parable of the Sower predicts only a partial success for the divine seed, the two kindred parables of the Tares and of the Net cast into the Sea foretell and cover all depravations of doctrine and inconsistencies of practice. It is still the kingdom of heaven, but of heaven tarnished, degraded, almost buried, by earth. Nothing gives us a higher idea both of the intellectual reach and moral greatness of the Saviour than these parables! The kingdom of heaven, with all its sad degeneracy, is worth living for and dying for; and though He comes not to send peace on earth but a sword, He is straitened till His baptism is accomplished.

Objections to Christianity anticipated by its own prophetic delineations.

Those who condemn Christianity for its abuses find their objections here foreclosed. A religion so candid, so prescient of its sorest wounds in the house of its friends, might disarm even the prejudice of its enemies. The very largeness and sadness of its confessions might propitiate their dislike. It is not an outward foe that Paul describes in Second Thessalonians, but one seated in the temple of God, and rather restrained by outward hindrance, as the Christian writers so generally understood the passage of Roman persecution at

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length withdrawn, and opening the way for the Church to generate a worse antichrist from its own bosom. So the antichrist of the Apocalypse, whatever else it may include, cannot exclude the shapes of heresy, pride, and tyranny under Christian names, which, like successive monsters from the abyss have made war upon the Lamb, and delayed the peaceful consummation of His reign. These embroiled, entangled, inextricable scenes, only to be interpreted as they are lived through by a sad but ever brightening experience, how could they have been conceived beforehand by any mortal intelligence? How could they in their grandeur, their terror, their ultimate dramatic unity and outburst of light and praise, be other than the forecastings of One who, above the illusions of superficial strife and sudden victory, suffers the whole unfathomable powers of evil to disclose themselves, that in one all-inclusive conflict they may be defeated and destroyed?

Antichrist.

The prophetic delineations the forecastings of omniscience.

III.

THE third prophetic topic to be noticed is the bearing which prediction has on the history and circumstances of the Jews. I shall speak first of the captivities and dispersions of the Jewish people, and secondly, of the New Testament prophecies of the destruction of Jerusalem.

Prophecies relating to the Jews.

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The captivity and return foretold.

1. There is, to begin with, not the slightest doubt that Jeremiah, following Micah, who lived a century before, foretold the destruction and captivity in the Chaldean period, and added the notice of a return after seventy years. This is recorded in Jer. xxv. 9–11; and the circumstances are such, that if the delivery of this prophecy be denied, no event in the life of the prophets can be accepted. Now this issue could not have been foreseen by any natural means. The return of a departed people was against all historical analogies, as not only the case of the Ten Tribes showed, but the existing usage on which recent discoveries have thrown so much light, of occupying such conquered lands by an exchange of peoples, that admitted usually of no succeeding break or disturbance. Now the utterance of Jeremiah was fulfilled by the edict of Cyrus (B.C. 536), a fact which is not contested; and all that is required is to suppose that Jeremiah, instead of counting from the last siege and captivity (B.C. 588), counts from the first (B.C. 606), as captivity then really began. It is not desirable to lay undue stress on this incident, however remarkable; and its chief weight lies in bringing into relief the pre-intimations of another and more terrible captivity and dispersion, from which there has been as yet no return. Without bringing in here utterances in the Gospels there is in the Old Testament alone quite enough to point

The return contrary to all historical analogies.

The Old Testament points forward to the present dispersion of the Jews.

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forward to the present captivity and dispersion of the Jewish people. The leading passages are Leviticus xxvi. and Deuteronomy xxviii., and these if read over to any number of dispassionate hearers, who should then be asked whether they applied better to Israel in Babylon, or to Israel scattered as it has long been throughout the world, would suggest only one interpretation. There is no word more prophetic in all history than this:[1]

Predictions in Leviticus and Deuteronomy.

"Thou shalt become an astonishment, a proverb, and a by-word among all nations, whither the Lord shall lead thee."

The marvel is increased by the sense of long-continued endurance, which these oracles involve, and also of adherence to their own religion, for though it is foretold that they should serve gods of wood and stone, which has been abundantly fulfilled in their enforced conformities to idolatry or superstitions forbidden by their strict ritual, it is evidently taken for granted that they should still be a nation continuous in their old profession, and should at length by repentance return to favour with their fathers' God. All through the writings of the prophets a wider and longer dispersion seems to be contemplated than was fulfilled in Babylon, and a sorer trial of national vitality; and thus only a promise like that in Amos ix. 9 acquires significance:

The long-continued endurance of the people.

The prophetic writings contemplate a wider than a Babylonish captivity.

[1] Deut. xxviii. 37.

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The prophecy of Amos.

"For, lo, I will command, and I will sift the house of Israel among all nations, like as corn is sifted in a sieve, yet shall not the least grain fall upon the earth."

The centrifugal force of world-wide dispersion, with the centripetal of national cohesion, could not have been more distinctly expressed. It is not the calamity of national downfall, of expatriation and wandering to the ends of the earth, of proscription and outrage such as may well make Christians blush, even when it still breaks out in our own century; it is not even the tragic cause, as Christians believe, of this unmatched disaster, and which weighs like a doom not finally exhausted.

Its significance.

It is the power of resistance—the invincible reaction against all forces of change or dissolution, —the stubborn identity with his fathers, which from the heights of modern commerce or the fair equality of intellectual and political conflict, as from the depression of other days, makes the Jew still retire into solitude, to nurse a sad memory or a hope yet unfulfilled. Were the Jews converted, and were Palestine restored to them, would unbelief be able to hold its own? What would unbelief have said, had they been converted as easily as the Franks or the Saxons? or had Palestine been for long centuries the peaceful seat of an unconverted Hebrew people, to whom the Roman conquest had been nothing more than the exile in Babylon? We should then have heard enough

Could unbelief survive the restoration of the Jews to Palestine?

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of the argument from prophecy on the other side, and should have had reason to fear, as we have not now, for the truth and the success of the Gospel of Christ.

The destruction of Jerusalem.

2. With respect to the second chief point bearing on the Jews—the alleged prophecies by Jesus of the destruction of Jerusalem, as preserved in the first three Gospels—it must indeed be frankly granted that we have not the unanimous accordance by critics of every school, Christian and non-Christian, as to the existence of these Gospels previous to the year (A.D. 70) when Jerusalem was taken. But we have what may be called a great revolution in criticism going on, from the days of Strauss, who would not allow that we had clear evidence of the existence of any of the Synoptists till the middle of the second century, down to our own time, when leaders of negative opinion bring up at least one of the Gospels before the Jewish catastrophe. Thus Hilgenfeld brings up Matthew (in its supposed Hebrew form), and Keim (in its Greek); while Hitzig before them had done the same for Mark. A critic so thoroughly unfettered by tradition—though not negative—as Bernhard Weiss, places Mark in 69; yet one can easily see how hard it is, even for great scholars who disbelieve in the supernatural, to grant the earlier date, since a real prophecy springs at once into view. The conduct of Strauss here presents

A revolution in criticism going on.

The dates of the Gospels according to various critics

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Strauss's changes of position.

one of his remarkable vacillations. Though anxious to place Matthew so late, he is constrained in his first editions to grant that Jesus may have uttered the words ascribed to Him, drawn from Jewish tradition, as to some overthrow of the temple, and helped perhaps by Daniel ix. 26, 27. He argues against their being put into His mouth after the event; for then Matthew would not have added (xxiv. 29) that the speaker announced Himself as coming "immediately" in the clouds: since this the event had falsified. On reflection, Strauss seems to have thought that even this was a less difficulty than to grant the reality of the utterance, which made Jesus and Daniel too like prophets, and Matthew too like an early historian. Hence in his new Life of Jesus he comes down to the grosser theory of a prophecy so minute and elaborate being an *ex post facto* creation. No other scheme remains, unless we hold with Renan that Jesus, speaking of the temple buildings—

Renan's theory.

> "*Divined* that they would have a short duration;"[1]

and at the same time, that such words were "lent" to Him by the Evangelists.

But if we must fall back on prophecy after the event, and prophecy so extended, so terrible in its details, so startlingly coincident in its most awful features, as Strauss grants, with Josephus and

[1] *Vie de Jésus*, p. 211, and p. 273, *note*.

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contemporary history, then what are we to think of the honesty or intelligence of the Evangelists, who could put all this into the mouth of Christ? Macaulay wrote the "Prophecy of Capys," but he only put it into his *Lays of Ancient Rome*, and not into a Roman history; so that the Gospels sink into lays, if not into frauds. This is opposed to the whole evidence of their historic character, and also to the fact that in the very passages in question they go far beyond the fall of Jerusalem, to its long-continued desolation and treading down by the Gentiles, which could not then be suggested by the event. Unquestionably Christ elsewhere anticipates a longer career for the victories and trials of His gospel; and in these very oracles the so-called "times of the Gentiles," which had to be "fulfilled," cannot be limited to one generation, and that the generation which (as in Matt. xvi. 28; Luke xxi. 35) had enjoyed His own presence.

The honesty and intelligence of the evangelists on the principles of negative criticism.

Christ's anticipations of the victories and trials of His Gospel.

IV.

The fourth and last head of prophecy is that bearing upon the other nations of the world. The mere predictive aspect of these manifold notices is not that which is chiefly regarded. The main design is to show that the Gentiles are also amenable to moral government, with its laws and retributions, and that a place is preparing for them in the Messianic kingdom, which could only be theirs

The nations of the world.

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through the downfall of pride and the turning from idolatry. Some specimens only of prediction from this wide field are selected. If prophecy has here failed to predict, it is the most splendid failure in all history.

Ishmael.

To begin with the notice of Ishmael in Gen. xvi. 12:—

> "And he will be a wild man [literally, a man like the wild-ass of the desert]: his hand will be against every man, and every man's hand against him: and he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren."

The Arab people.

No picture could be more complete of the wild liberty and defiant, untameable independence of the Arab people to this day. Nor will their descent from Abraham's son be denied, which is their own cherished belief, whatever of other and kindred blood, and even of alien, may have mingled with theirs, to form the "great nation" predicted in Genesis xvii. 20, and which has so moulded the history of the world. That this people who have written their name, though in a spurious copy, beside Judaism and Christianity, on the monotheistic faith of the world, should have such a notice and prefiguration in the history of Abraham is to say the least singular; and while predictions of great non-Christian writers as to Mohammedanism are now being falsified, the features of the Arab race that framed it, and left even their weakness upon it, stand in the Bible as sharp as ever.

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Egypt.

It is no great transition to pass from Ishmael to Egypt, linked through Hagar with Arabia, and itself coming in the Old Testament as early on the scene. Very little of Isaiah, Jeremiah, or Ezekiel, bearing on Egypt has been challenged, though accounted for by political sagacity, moral foreboding founded on experience, or where these fail, remodelling after the event. The unexpected results of Assyrian exploration, even more than of Egyptian, has confirmed the accuracy of the prophetic record. The sagacity of Gesenius—rationalist though he was—kept him from contesting the conquest of Ashdod by Sargon,[1] though that monarch never appears outside the Bible; and now the full inscription, involving also the connexion with Egypt, is recovered. So likewise the conquest of No (Thebes) in Nahum iii. 8–10, is in every point verified, and all the perplexities which had led this to be regarded as an interpolation, are at an end.[2] These verifications also support a fulfilment of Ezekiel xxix. 8–12, regarding a desolation of Egypt by Nebuchadnezzar for forty years. Though we have as yet no mention of this, the humiliations of Egypt by Assyria in the two foregoing cases at so much earlier a date remove the difficulty, and lead us to appreciate at its worth the remark of Mr. F. W. Newman:

The results of Assyrian explorations.

[1] Isaiah xx.

[2] Schrader, *Keilinschriften*, p. 398–9, 2nd Edition. For *No (Thebes)*, p. 450.

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"Happily the grasp of the Chaldean was more limited than human imagination." [1]

It is in the same chapter of Ezekiel that what is here called his "human imagination" enabled Ezekiel to draw so wonderful a picture of the debasement of Egypt, which, notwithstanding the transient splendours of the Ptolemies, remains so true to this day:—

"It shall be the basest of the kingdoms; neither shall it exalt itself any more above the nations: for I will diminish them, that they shall no more rule over the nations." [2]

The kings of the South in Daniel.

In connexion with the Ptolemies, we have the series in Daniel xi. respecting their relations as kings of the south, with the Syrian monarchs as

Porphyry's explanation.

kings of the north, which Porphyry--the greatest antagonist of Christianity in the third century, found so accurate, that he could only explain it as written after the event.

Other prophecies.

There are notices even in Hosea of the Assyrian captivity;[3] and the great prophecies of Isaiah respecting the deliverance of Jerusalem in his day, received, as all admit, remarkable accomplishment. Even Sennacherib on the Taylor cylinder does not claim to have taken Jerusalem; and we can read between the lines his own defeat. The final downfall of Nineveh is wonderfully foreshadowed in Nahum iii., where he compares it to the capture

[1] *Hebrew Monarchy*, p. 326. [2] Ezek. xxix. 15.
[3] Hosea x. 6; xi. 5.

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of Thebes, indicating the action of fire, which all the Ninevite remains so illustrate.

Nahum and Zephaniah on Nineveh.

Even more distinct as to a final desolation is Zephaniah ii. 15:—

"This is the rejoicing city that dwelt carelessly, that said in her heart, I am, and there is none beside me: how is she become a desolation, a place for beasts to lie down in! every one that passeth by her shall hiss and wag his hand."

The dreary solitude of the mounds from which such precious treasures have been dug could not have been more terribly expressed. Yet these words of Nahum were written about B.C. 660, when the reign of Asurbanipal was at its zenith; and those of Zephaniah, who is generally placed some thirty years later, could not possibly be suggested by any long-continued overthrow.

The downfall and ruin of Babylon.

Of the references to Babylon in the prophets, it is necessary to select only those bearing on its downfall and ruin. Even Gesenius allows here a natural meaning,[1] but, as he honestly admits, that he cannot believe in an Isaiah writing this more than a century and a half before, and thus is shut up to a second Isaiah, this gives no solution; for how could this Isaiah, even if living in Babylon, know beforehand that the city was to fall or what was to be the manner of its capture? Still less could he know that Cyrus was to restore Jerusalem its temple? Thus we come back to our universal

[1] *Jesaia* III. 33; III. 88.

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remedy, prophecy after the event: and yet how can this help us as to the desolations of Babylon, continued as they are to this day? Gesenius refuses here, as generally, the more extreme rationalistic consequence of fictitious prophecy, satisfying himself with portents on the horizon; but what horizon in the sixth century before Christ could suggest this; and ought there not to be a third Isaiah (almost like the wandering Jew) who may receive the fatherhood of it many centuries later? Mr. Newman grants that this is one of a series of prophecies against Babylon, which have received either a most accurate or a very plausible fulfilment.[1] He seeks, however, to weaken the argument by saying,—

Gesenius.

F. W. Newman.

"That it is absurd to represent the emptiness of *modern* Babylon as a punishment for the pride of Nebuchadnezzar."

This, however, is a new style of theology, unless we hold that all sin is punished only in those who commit it: for if the next generation may suffer from a Nebuchadnezzar or a Napoleon, why not a more remote one, and is sin ever exhausted?

Another set of monumental prophecies against pride, luxury, and impiety, is the grand series against Tyre, begun in Isaiah and ended in Ezekiel. The doom in Ezekiel xxvi., that Tyre should be "a place to spread nets upon," has, as travellers attest, been literally fulfilled. No great emporium

Tyre.

[1] *Hebrew Monarchy*, p. 315.

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has ever had such an elegy; and its echo survives in one of the sublimest chapters of the Apocalypse. (xviii.) As an example of prophecies said to have failed may be mentioned Damascus, of which it is said in Isaiah xvii. 1:— Damascus.

"It is taken away from being a city, and it shall be a ruinous heap."

But this is explicable by a temporary desolation such as was actually inflicted by Tiglath-pileser on the Syrian capital. We should have known what to think had prophecy attached all its curses to cities as continuously flourishing to this day as Damascus, or had Nineveh, Babylon, and Tyre been still, in spite of it, the centres of worldly greatness. But these shafts do not fly at random. Unlike the Homeric arrows in not being due to mere anger, their clang is terrible, and they fix their mark in decay and ruin.

In closing this Tract, one or two conclusions may now be suggested as flowing from the consideration of this evidence in all its parts.

1. *These alleged prophecies want the characteristics of such as are confessedly human.* They are not trivial or connected with ordinary human interests. They are not mere divinations, designed to amuse, to startle, or to gratify curious prying into the future. They are not Delphic or studiously am- Characteristics of the prophecies.

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biguous; for whatever of obscurity be in them, they bear the stamp of sincerity, and many of them are cheeringly, as others alarmingly, straightforward. They are not connected with any caste pursuing class interests; for though the prophets are a body and succession, their unity is chiefly in suffering; and while their oracles awake to bright hopes, they call themselves to stern duties.

Inadequate explanations. Prophecy after the event.

2. *Ordinary explanations are inadequate.* Prophecy after the event is so. It is discredited by the best rationalists. The act or habit is degrading to men who are still looked on as the moral instructors of the world. Anything like it would not be tolerated in the journalist, the historian, the ethical teacher of modern times, and only in the poet with understanding of his licence. Nor is coincidence pure and simple, an adequate cause. This has been seen to be so frequent, so startling, so like to design, that the argument from design applies; and design here involves knowledge more than mortal. Nor, once more, can sagacious forecast of moral order suffice. This is the most respectable solution short of inspiration. But it quite breaks down. What brooding on moral order could attain to such prophetic results? How could Abraham thus know that his call would bless all nations; or David that the Messiah should spring from him; or the prophets that particular kingdoms and cities should be

Coincidence.

Forecasts of moral order.

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destroyed; or Christ that His religion should fail with the Jews, and succeed with the Gentiles? The evidence must be taken in detail; and when it is seen how often the sense of insufficiency returns, this is the mark of a solution radically weak and abortive.

The Christian explanation alone adequate.

3. *The Christian view of prophecy not only accounts for the individual facts, but for the whole.* Prophecy is systematic, progressive, and all-inclusive. The theory of a revelation of redemption accounts for these features. Christ is then the centre; and hence all is connected in Him; and at the same time the Messianic part of revelation is largest, most important, most like the heart in the economy of the whole. This accounts also for the progress that we have seen, a progress in all directions and towards all issues, but all conditioned by the approach of Christ, and by the fulness of the disclosure as to His person and work and its consequences. And this accounts for the all-inclusive character of the predictions. The Gentile future must stand in the light of the Jewish past, and be indebted to it. The Jewish unbelief must serve as a foil to the Gentile faith, and be at length reconciled to it and one with it. The world's kingdoms must go through their crises of trial and judgment, to prepare the world as a whole for the Heavenly King. Thus, with prophecy, there is a

It accounts for all the features of prophecy.

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Redeemer, and with Him a philosophy of history leading upwards; without prophecy, no redemption, but law and sin fastened down by it, and any streaks in the darkness like a prophetic glimmer, due to no rising orb, but meteoric, and born of chaos or night. Ought not the Christian then to give heed to this "sure word," which is attested, as it is created, by a power above nature just where it needs to be; and may he not hope as he prays, that to others also this day may dawn, and this day-star arise.

The Christian's duty to give heed to the sure word of prophecy.

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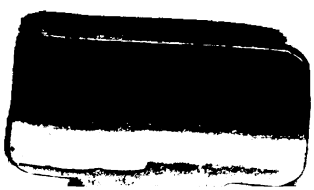

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